DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 480 EA 028 968

AUTHOR Lewis, Anne C.; Henderson, Anne T.
TITLE Urgent Message: Families Crucial to School Reform.
INSTITUTION Center for Law and Education, Washington, DC.
ISBN ISBN-0-912585-16-1
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 117p.
AVAILABLE FROM Center for Law and Education, 1875 Connecticut Ave, N.W., Suite 510, Washington, DC 20009 ($14.95 plus $5 postage and handling).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Case Studies; *Change Strategies; *Educational Change; Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Social Change

ABSTRACT

This report contends that the school reform movement--seemingly well-constructed from a distance--is failing to changte in a significant way what and how students learn. This is because it lacks a solid foundation built from the ground up and an informed and active school community, including parents. Using case studies the report examines various reform strategies and presents ways to include parents in change. The key ways parents and families are engaged in school reform are: 1) pushing the system, e.g., pressing for higher standards and an effective system of accountability, insisting on high quality public schools, and creating alternative public schools if the local schools fail; 2) helping design local school improvement, e.g., sitting on school improvement committees, monitoring results, and checking student work to ensure it reflects both high standards and high performance; and 3) taking part in the parent involvement opportunities created by the reforms, e.g., participating in school governance councils that set policy, heoping more parents to become actively engaged in the school, and attending staff development sessions. Appendices include research and reference material, and a table of parent-involvement provisions. (RJM)

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URGENT MESSAGE

Families Crucial to School Reform

Anne C. Lewis • Anne T. Henderson

Published by the Center for Law and Education
Washington, D.C.

EA 028 968

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Families Crucial to School Reform

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Published by the Center for Law and Education
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ISBN # 0-912585-16-1

Library of Congress Catalog Number # 97-94796

Published by the Community Action for Public Schools initiative of the Center for Law and Education

Design by Brian Adams

About Community Action for Public Schools (CAPS): CAPS links families, schools and community organizations which are working to improve schools and make their communities stronger. Together we believe that we can change schools to become:

Good schools: All children have the right to high quality public education. All students should learn what they need to go on to college, have a rewarding career and be effective citizens.

Fair schools: Good schools give all students effective opportunities to learn at a high level. Not only should they be taught well, but they should also get the supports they need to succeed.

Democratic schools: To be both good and fair, schools must work as partners with families, with community groups and with students.

If you like these ideas, please join us.

About the Center for Law and Education (CLE): This national, nonprofit organization seeks to advance the rights of all students, especially low-income students and their families. Its mission is to take a leadership role in improving the quality of education for all students and to enable low-income communities to address their own public education problems effectively. Consistent with the Center's goal, staff provide advice and collaboration in cases, publications and training and help community and school-based initiatives increase parent and student involvement in education.

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Foreword

This urgent message follows an important meeting held in February 1997 in Del Mar, California, to have a national conversation about advancing parent and family involvement in school reform. Attending were people representing key organizations and institutions involved in school reform, parent involvement, education, youth development and research. We convened around our shared sense that something has gone seriously astray in our pursuit of public schools that educate all students to high standards.

Our alarm stems from three closely connected problems:

1. Overall, gains in student achievement are meager and far too slow. Furthermore, the gap between our most and least advantaged students, which had been narrowing, is beginning again to widen.
2. Schools serving the lowest income areas, in general, have the fewest resources, the least qualified teachers, the lowest parent and community support — and the worst student achievement. In many of these schools, the majority of students are scoring not just below average, but in the bottom quartile.
3. Despite persuasive research on the close connection between parent involvement and improved student achievement, very few school reform efforts are making serious attempts to include low-income families.

In advance of the meeting, everyone invited responded in writing to two questions: What are the most powerful and effective approaches your organization is using to improve student achievement? What are the most pressing issues and questions your organization is struggling with to improve student achievement through parent and community involvement and school reform efforts?

From their responses, five key questions emerged.

1. What elements must be in place before parents can be meaningfully involved in school improvement?
2. How do we engage families, especially low-income families, in discussions about the key components of reform — high standards, fair assessment, good teaching?
3. What are the most effective strategies for mobilizing large numbers of parents and other community members to push for what it takes to educate all children to high standards?
4. What accountability systems, governance structures and policy contexts will best foster comprehensive school reform?
5. How do we build sufficient capacity in teachers, schools, school systems and communities to enable all students to learn to high standards?

Although we do not claim to have found fast, easy answers, we did gain insight into how to address these questions. And we firmly agreed on the immediate and undeniable need for families and community members to be engaged in three ways:

- ***As advocates*** who insist on excellent public schools that teach to high standards, provide adequate opportunities and extra supports so that students learn and are open to their families and community.
- ***As full partners*** in the process of changing schools, from understanding standards and assessment, to taking standards into the classroom, to monitoring the effects on student achievement.
- ***As participants*** in the many opportunities for parent engagement that the changes have created. Particularly important are deep, continuous conversations among educators, parents and students about what we want our children to learn, how it should be taught and the ways they will apply their knowledge.

These three roles move from the universal to the particular. This is because gains in one school do not necessarily spread to other schools. There must be a process that allows reforms to take root in schools yet spread throughout the school system, to be generated from both the bottom up and the top down. This notion of going from small to large, or "going to scale," is also reflected in the themes the participants identified. Without building accountability, capacity, and public will, the models that we know work and the vision and consensus that develop from discussions about standards will not go to scale.

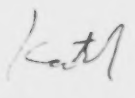
How did this meeting come to be? For two years, the Danforth Foundation in St. Louis and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City have collaborated to support a network of improving schools. Located in urban areas, these schools are struggling with the problems we know all too well. Yet despite their efforts to improve, from affiliating with national reform networks to reorganizing their structures, their student achievement is still appallingly low. The foundations asked: "Why is this so hard? Why aren't families more involved? What can we do about it?"

They directed these questions to the Center for Law and Education, a private, non-profit organization that advocates for the right of all children, especially those from low-income families, to a high-quality public education. The Center proposed convening a national meeting to address the issue of student achievement and offered to plan and facilitate it. From the first stages of planning, both foundations insisted that the focus be firmly on improving student achievement. To paraphrase Vince Lombardi, it's not the bottom line, it's the only line.

Also from the beginning, we decided to publish a report true to the spirit of the meeting. It is not, we hope, merely a summary, but a tool to use immediately. We present the data the Education Trust shared with us. We hope it alarms you, too. We also have tried to find concrete examples of schools that have done what we're talking about. We share stories of schools that have instituted far-reaching reforms based on high standards, in close collaboration with families and have made, as a result, substantial gains in student achievement.

Obviously, not everyone who could have made a contribution was able to attend the meeting. In composing the list of invitees, we sought to represent the overlapping fields of school reform, educational practice, parent involvement and family support, advocacy, government, research and youth development. About eighty people came; the list of who they are and what they do is included in Appendix E. Their voices are woven throughout this report.

The purpose of this report is to make the case for parent engagement to the people who can make it happen, from the grassroots to the White House lawn. For all children to learn at high standards, schools must become committed to doing *whatever it takes*. Not more children, but ALL children. There is no way this will happen unless their families insist on high standards; understand, shape and support the changes that must take place; and work collaboratively with the schools to help their children learn.



Kathy Boundy
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Center for Law and Education

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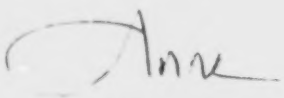


Anne T. Henderson
Consultant
Center for Law and Education

Acknowledgments

This effort was made possible by the Danforth Foundation in St. Louis, which generously underwrote the costs of planning, facilitating, and convening the Del Mar meeting; and by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City, which generously provided the support to write, print and promote the report. In addition, we would like to thank Kraft Foods for its support of Community Action for Public Schools at the Center for Law and Education and the Joyce Foundation, the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and the Ford Foundation for their support of the Center for Law and Education's school reform work.

There are many people who helped make this report possible. Their advice and assistance have been invaluable. We wish to thank the editorial board, which helped plan the meeting and guide the shape and content of this report: Kathy Boundy and Paul Weckstein of the Center for Law and Education, Don Davies of the Institute for Responsive Education, Norm Fruchter of the Institute for Education and Social Policy at New York University, Vivian Johnson of Boston University, Siobhan Nicolau of the Hispanic Policy Development Project, Robert F. Sexton of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in Kentucky, Joyce Germaine Watts of The Achievement Council in Los Angeles, Gary Wehlage of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Wendy Winters of Howard University.

Brenda Hostetler and Margo Quiriconi, our program officers at the Danforth and Kauffman Foundations, made the meeting and this report possible. They also pitched in every step of the way. Cathy Cole at the Danforth Foundation ably handled the logistics. Pattie Mansur at the Kauffman Foundation gave us astute advice on promoting the report. Mike Helmer at the Kauffman Foundation provided professional consultation on the meeting design. At the Center for Law and Education, John Clasby researched state statutes on the Internet, and Louise Davis deciphered the newsprint and produced a concise record of the deliberations.

And special thanks to everyone who came and worked so hard at the meeting. Your vision, ideas, energy, and commitment made the whole thing go splendidly. This report is for you and all of those for whom you work so hard.

Executive Summary

Current education reforms promise every child in the country a high-quality education. Millions of children have yet to know what that means, however, because there is no grassroots movement to demand and monitor standards-based reforms. They may be well-constructed, but the reforms lack a foundation of strong family and community involvement.

The reforms in teaching and learning are comprehensive, even revolutionary in some aspects. We know how to provide high-quality education in every classroom. Unfortunately, all too few schools and districts are using the knowledge available to improve student achievement. Tragically, children in low-income urban and rural areas who could benefit the most from high-quality instruction are affected the least by the school reforms.

The need to move more forcefully is urgent. The slow pace of change not only denies opportunities for learning but also threatens the reforms themselves because policymakers and taxpayers are impatient with efforts that are not delivering on their promises. Despite evidence of the reforms' effectiveness, many parents and communities see little change in their children's schools, even when higher quality is required by federal and/or state laws.

Representatives of more than 40 organizations concerned with involving parents and communities in school reform agree that three components are necessary for high-quality education:

- mobilizing families, schools and communities to push for reforms that benefit all children;
- policies and accountability measures that hold everyone responsible for improving student achievement; and
- strategies that increase the capacities of educators, families and students to teach and learn to high standards.

These representatives met in early 1997 under the sponsorship of the Danforth and Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundations to determine what the barriers are to grassroots involvement with school reforms and to develop strategies for removing them. The report of that meeting, *Urgent Message: Families Crucial to School Reform*, presents the results of the discussions. It also profiles more than a half-dozen schools where parent and community involvement are contributing to fundamental changes in schools and to increased student achievement, most often against odds that would discourage reforms elsewhere.

Data document that low-income students lack access to the instructional quality needed for them to achieve. In particular, these students are more often than not denied access to well-prepared teachers and sufficient resources for learning. The data also show a persistent gap in academic achievement between minority and non-minority students. On the other hand, compelling evidence shows that when schools and parents work together closely to support student learning, the results include higher student achievement, better attendance and greater student interest in post-secondary education.

Barriers that are currently blocking parents from being an integral part of the school reform effort include:

- teachers have neither the time nor the preparation to work closely with parents;
- schools are not held accountable for implementing changes that produce high student achievement, and parents often are unaware of what should be happening for their children;
- schools focus on "passive" types of parent involvement, failing to recognize the multiple ways that parents can participate effectively in school change;
- class and cultural differences keep schools and families apart, and not the least of these is racism in attitudes and practice; and
- parents and teachers often do not know that children have legal rights to a quality education and parents have rights to help them obtain it, nor do many parents have the resources to organize and advocate for their children.

Current school reforms reject the long tradition in American education of holding high expectations for a small percentage of students and only minimum ones for all others. If carried out, they would ensure that all students: are taught challenging content by qualified teachers who have adequate professional support; are assessed by measures tied to the content and that allow them to show how well they have mastered the content; attend schools that create rich learning environments for students, teachers and parents; and have adequate resources to meet the standards.

For this to occur, parents must be actively engaged in implementing and enforcing these critical reforms. That means parent involvement must undergo as much fundamental reform as teaching and learning. The report describes a framework for parent involvement in school reform initiatives that would allow them to be equal partners in improving public education.

The profiles in the report illustrate many of the pieces of the framework. While no schools are where they need to be regarding reforms or achievement levels, the schools in the report are making considerable headway with student achievement because of parent and community support and involvement. The profiles include Ysleta Elementary School, El Paso, Texas; Midway High School, Kingston, Tennessee; Engelhard Elementary School, Louisville, Kentucky; Patrick O'Hearn School, Boston, Massachusetts; Vaughn Street School, Los Angeles, California; Slowe Elementary School, District of Columbia; P.S. 261, Brooklyn, New York; and Norwood Park Elementary School, Chicago, Illinois. The situations are different, but parents in these schools used similar strategies to become a part of reform efforts, including: pushing the system to change, helping design local school

improvement and using the opportunities for parent involvement created by the reforms.

For school reforms to move from a few examples to a public school system committed to high achievement for every child, grassroot involvement of parents and communities needs support, including:

- a national campaign to emphasize its importance in designing, implementing and ensuring school reforms;
- networks, information sharing and collective advocacy;
- constant monitoring and reporting on progress with school reforms in communities with the greatest challenges and fewest resources;
- development of appropriate policy and accountability measures;
- a strong focus on developing the capacities of teachers, parents and schools to carry out the necessary transformation of learning for students; and
- resources as well as independent sources of information and outside assistance for local advocacy organizations that work with and on behalf of parents.

There are no "models" for building parent and community support for school reforms because each school's situation is unique. There is a common, immediate need, however, to mobilize parents and communities, hold everyone accountable for higher student learning and build the capacity of people to carry out critical reforms.

1. The Message and Why It Is Urgent

Picture a wonderful structure that only master carpenters were allowed to build. Its roof soars into the sky with evenly pitched eaves, every corner is finely notched, the beams are seamless with the joists, and all the wood shines from careful finishing. It seems as perfect as any construction could be.

Yet, where the wood meets the ground, there is no foundation. Nothing shields the building from shifting earth or water seeping underneath. Although only the finest materials and most expert help built it, the frame soon will sag, the boards will separate and it eventually will collapse.

This report contends that the school reform movement—seemingly well-constructed from a distance—is failing to change in a significant way what and how students learn. This is because it lacks a solid foundation built from the ground up by an informed and active school community, including parents.

The vision of higher standards to be achieved by every student is the most ambitious challenge American public education has ever faced. For the first time in our history, the nation has adopted policies that promise all students, rich and poor, no matter where they live or the language of their family or how long it takes them to learn, a quality education.

We assume this is what public education is all about. Yet most of us attended schools that invested in students "with promise" and seriously neglected all the rest. The goal of current reforms requires a seismic shift in thinking about instruction and learning, profound changes in practice and very different relationships between schools and families.

While this is a challenging assignment, we basically know how to create a quality educational environment for all children, teachers and parents. The profiles of school change in this report, for example, tell us how much can be accomplished even against great odds. These schools tell stories still in progress. They continue to work very hard to help their students reach high standards. They demonstrate the actions participants at the Del Mar Conference believe are necessary to obtain quality education for all students:

- families, schools and communities working together for children;
- accountability measures that hold everyone responsible for improving student achievement; and

"The attraction of private schools is telling. Americans imagine them to be what public schools should be but aren't.... One of the most appealing features may be the relationship between these schools and their constituents. Parents, grandparents, alumni and even the parents of alumni are actively encouraged to become involved. Interestingly, what people who like a particular public school say they like most is their close association with it. Taking part in the life of a school seems to be linked to a perception that the school is a good one."

David Mathews,
Is There a Public for the Public Schools?

- strategies that increase the capacities of educators, families and students to teach and learn to high standards.

In the schools we know about that try to embody these characteristics, neither the schools nor parents could have helped their children make noticeable progress working alone. Nor did they need to be rocket scientists. Quality education for all comes about through informed, focused and collaborative efforts by educators, students and parents who hold high expectations for themselves. Unfortunately, such schools exist in only a few places for a few children. Parents know this. Many who can make choices are opting out of traditional public schools because they can't sacrifice their children to such slow change. About 44 percent of parents responding to the 1997 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll approved of letting parents choose a private school at public expense. Three years ago, only 24 percent approved of the idea. This is not an option for most parents, however. Nor is it just parents whose patience is wearing thin. Policymakers and taxpayers are no longer willing to tolerate schools that continue to fail our children.

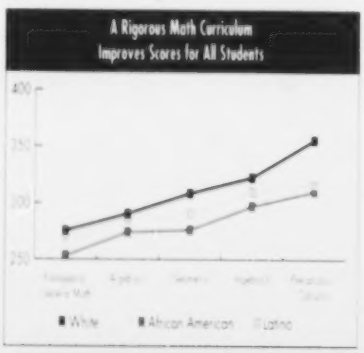
Even the most ardent believers in raising standards for schools and students worry about how long it is taking to move from a few examples of success, such as the schools in this report, to a public school system committed to the success of every child. Parents and children in large urban schools or in isolated rural ones probably are unaware of what any of these grandiose visions of school reform mean. What they are aware of is that their children are still not receiving high quality instruction despite the rhetoric about reform and improved academic outcomes for all. Moreover, the incremental pace of change allows the severest critics of public education to press for more radical changes that could undermine support of public education even further.

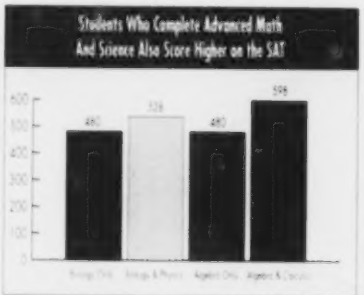
The Greatest Failures of All

This report's urgent message about transforming school and family relationships is more than a response to threats to our tradition of public education. It speaks to the failure of reforms so far to generate the improvement they promised.

Those most affected by this failure are the children of the poor. The Education Trust traces low-income children's lack of opportunity to learn in its data reports, showing that high-poverty schools have greater percentages of unqualified teachers, offer fewer college prep courses, lack instructional resources and, not surprisingly, have lower achievement

Students achieve when given the chance...





scores. When students, no matter their color or family income level, have access to rigorous math and science courses, they score higher on such tests as the SAT and ACT.

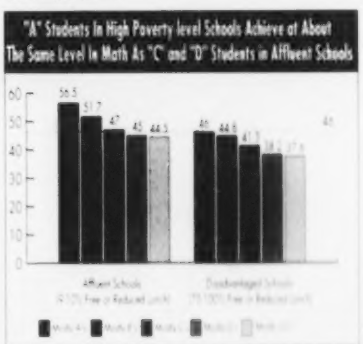
Underscoring the absence of quality teaching for urban children, a new report from the National Center for Education Statistics further documents these findings. It shows the comparatively high percentage of teachers in urban districts who are uncertified or have neither a major nor a minor in their subjects.

When the National Assessment of Educational Progress reports its results by sub-groups, there is a consistent gap between the performance of white students and that of African-American and Hispanic students. The gap narrowed steadily between 1975 and 1986, but it is widening again. What is not reported in detail are the differences in opportunities to be academically successful that students in low-resource schools experience every day. The public and perhaps parents, too, are left with the impression that poor children just can't do the work. In truth, the opportunities to do the work generally are not available.

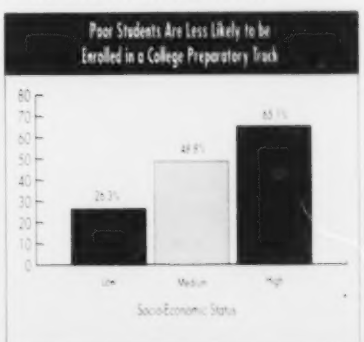
At one point in discussions about school reform, policymakers paid attention to "opportunity-to-learn" standards. Such standards are rarely mentioned by policymakers now. Neither the national summits of political leaders held in 1989 and in 1996 nor most state policies have considered how central it is to reform that students have the resources they need to succeed. An even greater omission, however, is information about how well—or if—the plans and requirements of the various reform measures actually are taking place. The right actions, not the right words, ultimately determine if students have opportunities to learn.

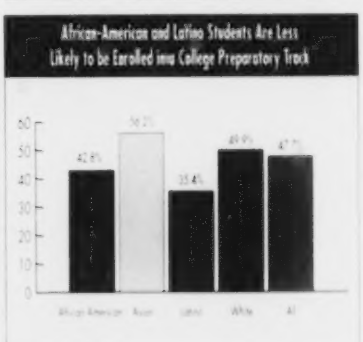
The American Federation of Teachers, not well-known for its reluctance to impose sanctions on students for poor performance, pointed out in its 1997 report on state standards activities that most states are not doing their part. Forty-nine states (Iowa, the only

But the standards are too low...



And access is limited.





"...(P)arent involvement contributed most to a school when it reflected consensus between parents and staff over the school's mission. If there was general agreement about the school's mission, then parent involvement provided important help and reinforced collective responsibility for student success. Such consensus affirmed respect for the professionalism of the staff and promoted a strong effort on behalf of student learning."

Fred Newmann and Gary Wehlage,
"Successful School Restructuring"

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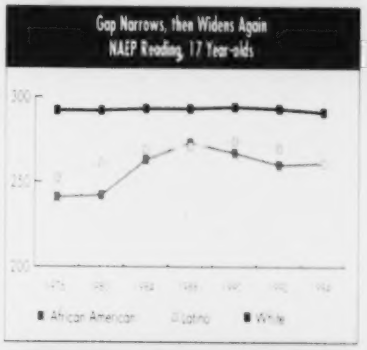
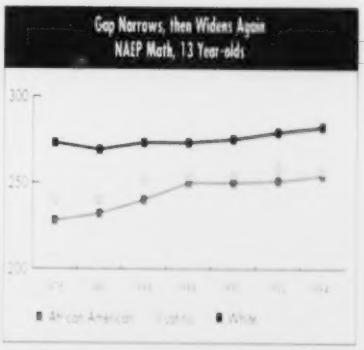
"Many schools continue to view parent involvement as a way to make the parents better parents, which they define as parents who are more responsive to what the school perceives to be its needs."

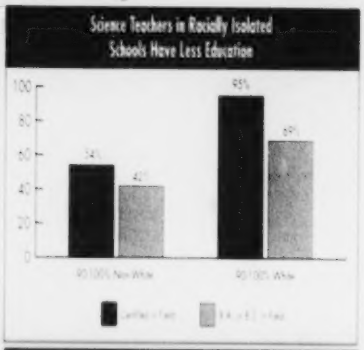
Siobhan Nicolau, Hispanic Policy Development Project, New York City

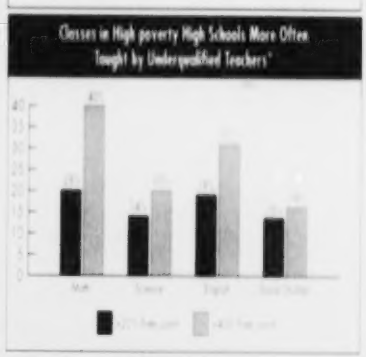
The gap is widening...

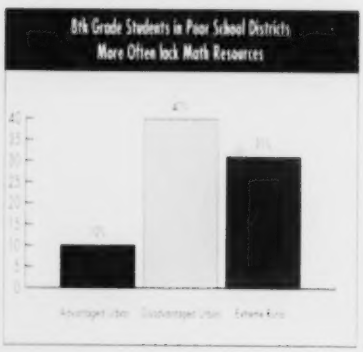




Because the opportunities are not equal.







missing one, has since produced local standards guidelines) have adopted or are developing higher content standards. Yet, only 13 states require and fund intervention programs to help low-performing students reach the new standards, says the report.

We agree that early interventions with failing students are critical, but our concerns are much broader and deeper. Assuring academic success begins with restructuring the basic experiences of students in classrooms, which is the intended purpose of current school reforms. Reducing the failure of reform efforts to lack of money or improper teacher assignments diverts attention from the overall need to change the learning environment significantly. It is this process of creating basic reforms that parents are excluded from, the Del Mar Conference determined.

The Serious Neglect of Parents in Reform Efforts

Why is comprehensive, well-crafted school reform not making much progress? Certainly, it is awesome to think of how many changes must occur simultaneously in many institutions and settings. Still, no matter how much scaffolding goes on at the top, a fundamental flaw of the reform movement so far is that parents are not there to help build the foundation.

Granted, in most communities engaged in reform a few parents serve on the task forces and committees organized to plan changes. In some places they are at the table when important decisions about staffing and resources are made. They may be invited to come to schools to hear about what standards mean or learn about new kinds of assessments.

Yet, in most communities parents generally are neither involved nor well-informed. Their absence from discussions and decisions about school change deprives reform efforts of the support that will help them hold up over time. Because they are not included in significant planning, parents are left to concern themselves with peripheral issues, worrying about the use of calculators or the time spent in noisy group work. Few parents are asked to think about how schools could or should improve.

A 1994 Public Agenda survey of parent attitudes found consensus about what schools need to do—teach essential skills and provide a safe environment. Beyond these two priorities, there was no consensus, although parents were open to changes that did not detract from learning basic skills. Without chances to engage in more thoughtful conversations, parents have limited knowledge about standards, for example, or how critical thinking helps students learn basic skills. As a result, many parents are unsure of, even alienated from, what is happening under the label of school reform.

More crucial is the greater number of parents who are unaware of what is *not happening*. For example, if Title I were being implemented as the law requires, students in higher poverty schools across the country would all be engaged in an accelerated, enriched curriculum focused on high standards. They would be taught by highly qualified staff using effective instructional strategies. They also would be receiving timely and effective individual help whenever they were having difficulty meeting any standards. And all this would be happening under a plan jointly designed by parents and the school. Of the thousands of schools using Title I monies, we know of only a handful that come close to fulfilling these requirements of the law.

The Del Mar conference realized that despite national and state flurries of attention to greater parent involvement as part of the reform movement, families are most often considered adjuncts to the intellectual work of the school. Parents need to listen, school people seem to say, rather than be listened to. Many schools are more interested in teaching "parenting" skills than in learning the insights parents have about their children. The parents who are truly dysfunctional (and who need extraordinary help from various community services) may distort the image of other parents. As a result, teachers and administrators may label parents who do not voluntarily show up at school or who come only when problems arise as uncaring or unskilled.

Efforts at reform apparently haven't created a bridge between the professional culture within schools and the non-professional, personal culture of the home. For example, a recent Public Agenda survey found that:

- sixty percent of Americans believed parents and the community should have more say in basic decisions within schools;
- only one-fourth of teachers approved of greater parental inclusion in decisions; and

"How can we foster an attitude that public education is a community enterprise and central to children's success? Certainly we need to promote greater parent involvement, but schools and communities working together must do a better job of reaching all children, whatever the situation at home. The movement away from community and toward individual and personal solutions (vouchers, private schools, home schooling) allows too many children to continue to fall through the cracks."

Kelly Butler, Parents for Public Schools, Jackson, Mississippi

"Parents must understand what is different about classrooms where their children are expected to reach absolute standards. They must also know how to help their children at home and in school to reach higher standards."

Bob Sexton, Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, Lexington, Kentucky

- less than 15 percent of administrators thought it was a good idea.

No group is more seriously disenfranchised from the work of schools than the families of the poor and of children of color. A Congressionally mandated study of parent involvement in Title I schools found that a fourth of the principals surveyed believed "parent attitudes about the school" were "a problem." On the other hand, half of them also acknowledged that the lack of staff training in working with parents prevented better relationships. A large percentage of the Title I school principals cited "cultural differences" as a barrier to parent involvement.

Yet, the report's survey data also found minimal effort to go beyond traditional parent involvement activities such as parent meetings and conferences with teachers. For most parents, this may be all they can do. That is why the typical kinds of parent involvement need restructuring, too, so that when schools and parents do have opportunities to come together, the conversations and decisions will be meaningful and important. They should be talking about visions and school improvement as well as about PTA dues and field trips.

The Parent Factor in Student Achievement

Many factors determine how well children succeed in school. Often overlooked is the large body of research that documents positive effects on student achievement when schools involve families as equal partners. It is just common sense that parents' interest in and support of their children's learning *at home* result in higher achievement at school. Equally persuasive is the research that shows when parents have many different kinds of opportunities to be involved *in the school*, their children go further in school, and the schools they attend get better results.

In fact, the stronger the partnership between schools and families, the higher the student achievement. In *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*, a review of the research, Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla document this positive effect. Across the studies they found that the children who are furthest behind make the greatest gains in achievement when their parents are part of the school life. It follows that parents who understand the purposes and expected outcomes of standards-based reforms will be even more able to support at home what teachers and administrators are committed to at school. They also can become better advocates for those reforms when they realize their children's teachers and schools are not improving.

Henderson and Berla found these benefits for students when schools support families' engagement in their children's learning at home and at school:

- Higher grades and test scores
- Better attendance and more homework done
- Fewer placements in special education
- More positive attitudes and behavior
- Higher graduation rates
- Greater enrollment in post-secondary education

The benefits extend to families, too. Parents develop more confidence in the school. The teachers of their children have higher opinions of them as parents and higher expectations of their children. As a result, parents develop more confidence not only about helping their children learn,

What ALL Parents Should Know and Be Able to Do About School Reform

- Participate in creating a vision for the school that sets high expectations for all.
- Take part in developing a system to measure and report on student progress and in holding the school and district accountable for the results.
- Be involved in monitoring and analyzing data on student achievement.
- Be involved in decisions that affect their children's opportunities to learn, such as how resources are used, what the learning objectives are and what instructional strategies ought to be used to accommodate individual differences.
- Know what needs to change in teaching and learning to ensure their children learn well.
- Know what their children should be learning and know it well enough to ask good questions.
- Accept responsibility for providing support at home that will help their children learn to high expectations.
- Understand their children's rights to receive a high-quality education and their own rights to be involved—and be vigilant about exercising those rights.
- Know how to find and use outside help when their children are not receiving the kind of education that will enable them to meet high standards.

but also about themselves as parents. Often the involvement encourages parents to seek more education.

For school reforms to mean what they say—success for all students—efforts such as those described in this report where parents are collaborating on reforms or advocating for them, as need be, must multiply by the thousands. The ability of such schools to point the way is fragile as long as there are so few of them. Whenever reform efforts reached a peak in the past, researcher Richard Elmore points out, those committed to change usually were gathered up and concentrated in one place. Their isolation eventually meant that their innovations withered away. As some of the examples demonstrate, parents often need outside help to organize their attempts to get reforms that have staying power and significantly change the learning environment for their children.

We do not underestimate the challenge of building respect between educators and parents so they can work together on needed reforms. However, we are concerned that time is short. We must demonstrate that higher standards and other reforms can take hold in public education programs serving all children, including those from low-income families and those with significant disabilities. Well-funded efforts exist to turn the disillusionment of parents with their schools into an excuse for abandoning the structures of public education. Just as likely is the loss of support for reform because policymakers and taxpayers see little progress.

Frankly, the public school reform movement cannot go much further without the kind of parent involvement and support called for in this report. Our message about transforming public schools is urgent. It must be done, done right, and done quickly.

"School reform and parent/community involvement are not separate efforts but part of an integrated system where administrators, teachers, parents, and community members are partners working collaboratively to improve student achievement."

Joan Solomon, Missouri Department of Education

Key Ways Parents and Families Are Engaged in School Reform

For this report, we searched for examples of communities where families are involved in school reform and, as a result, have experienced substantial improvement in their student's achievement. (For a summary chart of the schools profiled in this report, see Appendix D.) Drawing from the examples, we determined that there are three primary ways parents contribute to moving schools toward quality standards and higher student achievement.

1. Pushing the system

Pressing for higher standards and a fair, effective system of accountability—
Before a lawsuit prompted the state supreme court to throw out Kentucky's educational system in 1989, 20,000 Kentucky parents and citizens attended a series of local meetings convened by a statewide citizen organization, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. At the meetings, participants talked about what they wanted from their public schools. Their vision for change built the political will for adoption of the Kentucky Education Reform Act, one of the most comprehensive in the country, in 1990. This consensus also has helped weather attempts to roll back the reforms.

Insisting on high quality public schools—
In communities where parents are organized and forceful about their goals for higher quality education, the schools have high expectations of students and teach to high standards. At Ysleta Elementary School in El Paso, Texas, where 90 percent of the students are from Spanish-speaking homes, a low-income Hispanic community organized and held accountability sessions at the school. After four years of joint parent-teacher efforts, 71 percent of Ysleta students now pass the state reading test and more than 78 percent pass the math test. Throughout Texas including El Paso, the Texas Interfaith Education Fund has created a network of Alliance Schools committed to reforms that improve student achievement and that are designed and implemented with the help of parents.

Pressing their local school to adopt school reform—
Slowe Elementary School, a 99- percent low-income, African-American school in Washington, D.C., adopted James Comer's School Development Program. Once a school where parents came no closer than the sidewalk across the street, parents now have their own center and sit on all the school improvement committees. Student test scores are 20-30 points above the national averages on standardized tests.

Creating alternative public schools if the local schools fail—
At P.S. 261 in Brooklyn, New York, activist parents purposefully chose a new principal who supported creating alternatives to the large, institutional schools where their children were not doing well academically. As a result, P.S. 261 is now a campus of four small alternative schools, each run by a teacher-director and a steering committee of parents and teachers. Student test scores have climbed steadily.

2. Helping design local school improvement

Sitting on school improvement committees or task forces to design and implement reforms and to draw in the whole community—
At Engelhard Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky, parents and teachers together found the most discipline problems and lowest test scores among fourth- and fifth-grade African-American boys. Realizing there was a connection between the two problems, they revamped the school's Title I program, bringing in Reading Recovery to the primary grades and insisting that all children learn to read by the end of third grade. Test scores are up 50 percent in four years.

Monitoring results and asking the hard questions—
At Norwood Park School (pre-K- eighth grade) in Chicago, the local school council

decided that student achievement would not improve unless the 48 percent mobility rate was reduced. Through a series of community discussions, it asked what it would take to keep families in the school. In response, the school added an all-day kindergarten program and built strong relationships with families. Mobility went down to 8 percent in three years, and achievement scores are up almost 50 percent.

Checking student work to make sure it reflects both high standards and high performance— At Ysleta Elementary School in El Paso, the school standards team of teachers, the principal, support staff, and parents looks closely at student work. Using the El Paso district standards, the team wrote scoring guides so that students, teachers and parents alike understand how to recognize high- and low-quality student work. In class, students use the scoring guides to rate their work.

Redesigning report cards so parents can understand how their students are progressing— At Engelhard Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky, parents complained that the report cards did not tell them how well their children were progressing on the state standards. They worked with teachers to design a new report card that lists the state's learning goals for each subject so parents can understand their children's scores from the Kentucky assessments.

3. Taking part in the parent involvement opportunities created by the reforms

Participating in school governance councils that set policy, develop new programs, and decide how to address low student achievement— At the Vaughn Street School in Los Angeles, California, the school governance council members, half of whom are parents at the school, decided to create a 200-day, year-round academic program and reduce class sizes to 20 students for each teacher in grades 1-3 before the same initiative became statewide. To address the pressing problems of families in its very low-income community, the council also designed a family center, a one-stop shop for social services and a career ladder program for parents.

Helping more parents to become actively engaged in the school— At O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston, Massachusetts, parents created a family center and a parent outreach program to help parents be more engaged in the inclusive schools. More than 25 percent of children have significant disabilities requiring supplemental and supportive services to participate in the regular classroom curriculum. The parent center at O'Hearn (as well as in many schools around the country) offer workshops about standards-based education, how children's programs can be modified to enable them to meet the expected standards, assessments and accommodations that may be necessary. They also offer language instruction, organize ways for parents to help out in classrooms and provide opportunities for networking.

Offering or obtaining resources to improve the school— At Midway High School in rural Tennessee, parents rallied to save their school after the county decided not to renovate the 50-year-old building. The school is now an agricultural service center where students offer services such as equipment repair and cattle weighing. Local family farming businesses provide opportunities for students to learn math, science, social studies and writing skills.

Attending staff development sessions— At several schools profiled in this report parents take part in staff development along with teachers. In New York City, many new, small schools have been organized around the city and offer help to other parents, teachers and students interested in forming smaller schools. In Texas, more than 600 teachers and parents have attended conferences together organized for the Alliance network of schools and focused on school reforms. At the Vaughn Street Family Center, workshops are open to parents and teachers as well as community residents.

Ysleta Elementary School, El Paso, Texas: *Involving Parents in Standards-Based Education Reform*

Why Ysleta?

Students at Ysleta, nearly all low-income and from homes where Spanish is the family language, do as well on math and writing portions of the Texas state assessment as the highest achieving schools in the state and are well above average in reading. The school is becoming standards-based in all that it does. Working with the new standards set by the El Paso Collaborative, it formed a school-wide standards team that includes parents. The team helps teachers set high expectations for student work. Students also learn to use scoring guides, critique each others' work and share the scores with their parents.

Not long ago, signs around Ysleta Elementary School in El Paso told parents, "wait for your children outside." And parents did so, to the extreme. Only a handful served on the PTA board, most others stayed away. Parents were just not part of the picture.

No matter that Ysleta Elementary School needed all the help it could get. It enrolls children from some of the poorest families in Texas. Nearly all (98 percent) are Mexican-American, and 95 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Many families are first-generation immigrants who work in "twin plants," or *maquiladoras*. Located in Juarez and El Paso, the[y] make low-cost clothing that has been manufactured in Mexico and "finish" it in the United States, paying minimum wages. Nearby, huge trucks lumber by on Alameda Avenue, carrying all manner of goods between the United States and Mexico.

By 1992, the school was in a crisis condition. Student test scores were "alarmingly low." Fewer than 20 percent of the students were able to pass all three sections of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), earning the school a "low performing" label from the Texas Education Agency. Then, the El Paso Interreligious Sponsoring Organization (EPISO), an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), invited Ysleta to take part in a major organizing effort to improve student performance.

By 1997, significant changes had taken place. Seventy-one percent of the students passed the state test in reading, 78 percent in math, and 67 percent in writing. The jump in achievement took place even though many students come from families who speak very little or no English and most are severely economically disadvantaged. Although the school still has a way to go before all students meet the new standards, it has come far considering that the standards were just adopted in 1996. How did this happen?

Restructuring worked on many levels and was driven by the understanding that the school would not get better without partnership with the community. First, the school invested in a parent educator. Then it agreed to place parents on all school improvement committees and open all opportunities for staff learning to parents. Title I funds were used for school-wide reform. Organizers from EPISO went door to door, asking families what they thought about the school and recruiting them to become involved. These early organizing efforts revealed that traffic safety was a key concern of the community. Despite heavy traffic around the school, the city did not provide traffic lights and crosswalks.

After a child was hit by a truck, the parent educator helped to circulate a petition demanding that the city take action. This sent a powerful signal to parents that the school was on their side. A few weeks later, EPISO held an assembly in the Ysleta gym where 200 parents faced their city councilman, the Ysleta school district superintendent, a school board member and representatives of the local police and state highway departments. This was followed by monthly accountability sessions. When Ysleta opened in August 1998 for the next school year, the traffic patterns around the school had been totally changed to protect children. The parents and school, working together, had won.

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How are Ysleta parents contributing to higher standards?

The El Paso Collaborative for Educational Excellence, a collaboration among three area school districts and the University of Texas at El Paso, worked to develop new, high standards for teaching and learning. These were introduced in May 1996 after a series of community discussions. Teachers at Ysleta say, "Parents took the standards apart. 'What does this mean? How does this connect to that?'" They agree that parents' presence at these meetings encouraged higher quality and more precise standards.

At Ysleta, a team of teachers volunteered to develop scoring guidelines to use in the classroom. These were intended both to raise expectations for the quality of student work and to help students improve their performance. The team expanded to include parents and the school's parent educator. The Collaborative provided training and information to the team.

Ysleta's teachers firmly believe their work on higher standards has been the best kind of professional development. The whole team developed various scoring guides for different grade levels and subjects. The parent members insisted the language be clear and easy to understand so that both parents and students could use them. "If you want us as parents to help our kids, we have to understand, too. If we understand, then our kids will. Then they can explain their ratings to us," said Bertha Ruvalcaba, a parent.

"The team began its task by asking, 'What is quality?" says Sharon Wiles, a sixth-grade teacher. "We looked at our work as teachers and asked, 'Do our lessons lead to high quality work from our students?' First, we check what the standards say is high quality and use them to set the top level of the scoring guides. Then we ask our students to use the scoring guides, rating their own work from the highest level down to the lowest."

Wiles also believes that assessing their own work helps students take ownership and focus on what is expected of them. "Once they get a handle on it," she says, "they become very critical, deciding 'is it a 4, 3, 2, or 1?' Students write critiques, bullet by bullet, and tutor each other. When students take their work home each week, they explain their scores to parents. This makes it easy for all to understand high standards and why they are so important to better student achievement."

For Sara Campa's daughter Samantha, a second grader, the standards are coming alive. "She is already beginning to know what's expected of her," says Campa. "Samantha says 'Momma, I need to write a paper with the five w's (who, what, when, where, and why).' I am expecting to see much higher quality in her writing than my older children."

"I used to drop my kids and run. I didn't feel comfortable at the school. Now I take the time to walk the playground. For a change, I am asked for my input into how the classroom can be better. The school is my second home."

Sara Campa, Ysleta parent

Going Full Circle

Ysleta is organized into five vertical teams, kindergarten through sixth grade. This structure is critical to the school's success because it builds continuity and accountability all along the line. If one teacher is lax, then others pay the price

"In 1993, I moved here from another state and began to become involved. My interest was in helping my oldest child with special needs. I got more help in four months than I got in four years in the schools before. Now I look at myself in a different way and think about how to help myself. Learning is something I can continue doing. Parents can make an equal contribution to our children's education. Now I understand how my child learns, and she has taught me through the language of standards."

Bertha Ruvalcaba, Ysleta parent

as the students move up. The vertical teams also create smaller units within the 650-student school. Everyone connected with the team family — students, teachers, parents, other family members — has developed close working relationships over the past two years. This smooths the transitions for students and their parents from one grade to another.

Ysleta is planning other ways to involve parents in standards reforms. The next step is to develop portfolios of student work to give families a deeper idea of what students are doing. Parent-teacher conferences can then center on the quality of work in the portfolio. Myrna Castrejón, the parent educator, also wants to sponsor a series of events in the evening, such as math-science nights and a session on scoring and assessment. "When parents come into the building," she says, "they should be able to see Level Four work posted in the halls and know what that means."

2. Why Haven't Parents Been Involved?

One probably cannot find a public school that says it does not want parent and family involvement. After more than a century of standardization and school bureaucracies, public schools still remember—albeit faintly—that their roots were in families. On the frontier, they began as a shared responsibility of neighboring families who hired the teacher, set the curriculum, and dictated the values to be taught. In the towns, state schools were set up to serve poor children whose families could not afford their own schools. These evolved into our state-supported system, but the assumption was that schools and families are closely tied, an assumption that has lasted well into this century.

The growth of urban districts and of large suburban districts weakened school-family ties. As the industrial revolution boomed, schools were organized along factory models with managers (administrators) and workers (teachers). Schools may be thought of as a protector of the democratic ideal, but their organization has been autocratic for some time. Families came to play minimal roles in decisions about their schools. Pressured to prepare most students for low-skill jobs, schools lowered their academic expectations, and until mid-century more than one-half of the students dropped out before completing high school.

Learning From Mistakes

The beliefs about a democratic ideal of education and local control persist in most places despite a growing gulf between families and schools. Once, many thousands of parents and citizens kept close to schools by serving on school boards, but consolidation of school districts reduced the number of school districts from about 84,000 just after World War II to only about 15,000 today. We also built enormous schools. Some high schools have as many as 5,000 students because, it was assumed, the larger the better. The bigger the school system, the more administrators it needs. As more students stayed in school longer, efficiency became the most important consideration. This led to the sorting or tracking of students and greater use of testing. Generations of teachers have been taught to accept the bell curve, or the inevitability of a few students doing well, most achieving minimally, and a group that always fails.

Today's school reformers acknowledge that many of these decisions were wrong for students. It is ironic to see a new generation of efforts designed to counteract the bigness and alienation created by reforms in times past. Now the demand is for downsizing of school bureaucracies, school-site decisionmaking, schools-within-schools, small high schools and charter schools. Instead of smorgasbord schools with low expectations for

Midway High School: *A School Saved by Parents*

For 50 years Midway High School has served as the center point for its community of scattered farms, separated from the county seat of Kingston, Tennessee, by the Clinch and Tennessee Rivers. For more than 30 years, the families have fought off attempts to close the school and send their children on a long bus ride to town.

What county officials couldn't do by referendum, they finally tried to do through neglect. They voted to improve all the county's schools except Midway, anticipating that its parents would become discouraged with their aging wooden structure and agree to consolidation.

They underestimated parent power, however. For its 200 students in grades 9-12 and their families, the school "is all they have other than churches to hold the community together," according to Houston Raby, principal. A student at Midway in the 1960s, Raby sees "the people who watched me playing sports still coming to games. Whatever is going on at the school, folks come."

Midway's families, while predominantly white, are not wealthy. Most cannot make a living any more from farming and commute to jobs in Knoxville, almost an hour's drive away, or to other larger communities. About 44 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price meals. The percent would be higher, Raby says, if high school students were not so reluctant to identify themselves as poor.

What the families have in abundance, however, is a sense of community provided by the school, and they fought back. For a year the community and school staff organized and campaigned to save the school. When the school board finally voted on a new proposal to renovate the high school rather than close it, parents and community members packed the gym where the meeting was held. They won funding for a $2 million renovation, which greeted students as they returned to school in September 1997.

More than better facilities was at stake in their victory. The school also revamped its schedule and made plans to use agricultural sciences as not only applied learning for students but also as a service to the community. The staff agreed to switch from a six-period day to a four-period day and attended professional development sessions to help them restructure their instruction to include more group work and hands-on learning. The school now could offer more electives, "but they are not basket weaving and such," says Raby. Instead, students can select from such subjects as anatomy, pre-calculus, journalism and drama. In the first year of the new organization (1996-97), the number of students on the honor roll doubled and discipline problems decreased. Midway's students score slightly above the state averages on the state's assessment system.

Parents participated with teachers in planning the new structures and are "happy" with the changes, Raby says. A survey at the end of the school year indicated that neither teachers nor students wanted to return to the old system. This instance of collaboration with parents is a tradition at Midway. Raby notes that parents are in the building every day, volunteering to help teachers, running the copy machine, and tutoring students in math and reading. "All we need to do is ask," he says.

The closest ties with parents come through the school's agricultural program. In the 1940s, almost every boy enrolled at Midway High School participated in the program. Today, 75 percent of both boys and girls take agricultural sciences, so this was a logical area to institute reforms. The school is establishing itself as an agricultural service center, starting with transportable equipment to help farmers weigh and hold large animals for treatment. Farmers can drop off broken equipment at the school for repair. A greenhouse maintained by the students provides the community with bedding and vegetable plants in the spring and poinsettias at Christmas. There are also plans for the students to learn how to do landscaping.

The school hopes to obtain funding through the Annenberg Rural Challenge for other equipment that would be too expensive for individual farmers to own. Each project in which students go out into the community is considered learning. Maintaining equipment, for example, requires students to estimate costs and use spreadsheets. Science concepts come into play when the students help with and observe animal husbandry. They record their visits with farmers in reports and journals.

For David Westridge, part-time music teacher, the parents' success at rallying support for their school gained him more than a new room where all his students can practice together. Until the renovation, they were crammed into small portables. He learned respect for what parents, teachers and a community can accomplish when they work together. "This may be a small community and cover a lot of area, but it can come together in a big way for its kids," he says.

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"For too long, the schools of our country have treated students as products moving along an assembly line, or as receptacles into which teachers should pour learning and which should then be tested to see if the learning has remained or leaked out. In emphasizing that students are people, I wish to encourage schools to challenge these well-entrenched patterns. If educators pay careful attention to human relationships and foster a sense of the school as a community, schools can become places where both students and teachers want to be."

Harold Howe II, *Thinking About Our Kids*

most students, reformers say that all children should have the same high-quality education.

The division of responsibility in most schools today—the "experts" on learning in the schools and the "supporters" of learning at home—makes the adoptions of school reforms difficult. Few would challenge the contention that parents and families are not only a child's first teachers, they are a child's most important teachers, always. Nor should the importance of the professional expertise of teachers and administrators be minimized. Experts are needed in schools and homes. When a youngster enters school, however, parents and families no longer are the principal teachers, advocates and participants in decisions about their child's learning. Parent involvement becomes less and less expected as children advance in school except when there are problems or, at the end of high school, when parents may participate in post-secondary plans for their children. This separation of parents from what their teens are doing in school and out, according to recent research published by the American Medical Association, isolates young people and creates the potential for them to make unwise choices about their activities and friendships.

Barriers to Parent Involvement Today

The cumulative effect of school bureaucracies, increasing time demands on parents and increasing diversity among students' families and their communities built formidable barriers to school-family connections. Because of those barriers, a number of issues need to be confronted before a solid foundation for school reform can be laid.

Teachers Lack Skills

Teachers today rarely are prepared to build ties with families, nor do school structures foster them. The old schoolhouses of yesteryear may have harbored a rigid conformity—based on Protestant values for the most part—but they coupled teachers and families closely. Now, urban and suburban districts too often are large bureaucracies with a rigidity of their own that pays more attention to rules and roles than to relationships with families. The fragmentation of staff within schools, for example, contributes to the gulf that has developed between families and schools. Counselors and school psychologists make personal contacts with families that teachers used to do. With fewer opportunities to interact with parents, teachers have lost their ties to families and often develop misconceptions about parents and their attitudes toward school.

For teachers, working with families becomes a task, not a natural part of teaching, and one that is a low priority. Even though it is considered part of the teaching responsibility, teachers receive little help on involving parents. Few teacher preparation programs include parent involvement in their curriculum. Only 14 states require some training in involving families for elementary certification; only six for secondary certification. Principals list lack of staff training in working with parents as the third highest barrier to parent involvement (after lack of time on the part of parents and of staff).

In low-income schools, an even more important barrier is the perception of teachers and administrators that parents are unable to help with schoolwork because of their own inadequate education background. Solid research disputes this attitude, as do

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Why Do Parents Get Involved?

Experts are always telling parents how they should get involved in their children's education, but few of them step to the other side and try to understand what goes into parents' decisions to become involved.

A new synthesis of research on this issue found three factors that appear to explain the choices parents make. The first factor is their belief about what is important, necessary and permissible for them. In working-class and low-income families, parents often think their involvement should be limited to such activities as getting children to school on time and insisting that they have good manners. For many of these families, their life experiences "may have taught them that 'parents like me don't get active—they send their children to school and hope for the best,'" the researchers say. Among upper middle-class families, parents are far more likely to see their roles as interconnected with the school.

The second factor is how comfortable parents are in helping their children with schoolwork, their sense of "efficacy." If they believe they can help their children academically, they are much more likely to be actively involved. While some studies equate efficacy with the level of parent education, others have found that parents with little education often are confident they can influence their children's education positively. They see intelligence as a quality that changes and grows, not as something fixed and which they cannot influence.

The third factor in the research is about invitations and opportunities. Parents are quick to pick up negative signals from schools and are wary of what they see as contrived or insubstantial opportunities, those where teachers talk and parents listen. Schools that want more parent involvement need to show their openness to it in multiple ways and make parents feel they are being invited to participate actively.

The researchers conclude that schools need to understand better how parents see their roles and how effective they feel in helping their children with schoolwork. Moreover, they say, "schools and teachers should be enabled—through reduced hours with students in class, other released time, or part-time help—to spend at least a portion of the work week interacting with parents."

Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey and Howard Sandler (see Appendix A)

"Teachers are struggling with three related problems. The first is teachers' difficulties in trying to work in schools that lack consistent support for teachers' outreach efforts to families and communities. The second is lack of support for teachers who are trying to ignore the bell curve and instead expect excellent performance for all students. The third is the difficulty of replicating effective programs from one school setting to another."

Vivian Johnson, Boston University

many of the schools profiled in this report. Studies by Reginald Clark on low-income families whose children are high achievers in school and other family time-use studies are summarized in *A New Generation of Evidence*. This research finds that very low-income, poorly educated families use a number of ways to support their children's learning such as frequent conversations between parents and children, consistent monitoring of how their time is used and strong emphasis on the importance of education.

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"Too often, parent education efforts speak 'down' to parents, simplify the issues, or assume lack of interest or understanding. We need more techniques that start from the assumption that parents and other community members are perfectly capable of learning relevant information when presented with the right opportunities."

Donna Beegle, Marshall Caring Community, Portland, Oregon

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Lack of Time

The time pressures on working parents are well documented. What many parents and reformers may not appreciate is that teachers don't have free time to spend on non-instructional responsibilities. School schedules do not consider parent contacts part of a teacher's role other than conferences and back-to-school nights. Most teachers can contact parents only through the school office phone during the day (the number of classroom phones is growing but they are still available to only a small percentage of teachers). And many teachers are working parents, too.

Schools Need to Be More Creative

What schools do to involve parents defines the whole relationship. According to Joyce Epstein of The Johns Hopkins University, a researcher on parent involvement, "the strongest and most consistent predictors of parent involvement at school and home are the specific school programs and teacher practices that encourage and guide parent involvement."

Individually, parents can do little to change the relationships or broaden the areas where their opinions are taken into consideration. Even when they try, according to a Public Agenda report, active parents often become so worn down by the school bureaucracy that they narrow their focus to what they can do for their own children, such as making sure they get the "right" teachers.

Although the traditional modes of reaching out to parents such as meetings and newsletters result in only limited participation, schools tend to do little else. The one activity that does draw in parents is also the most personal—conferences with teachers. Typically, however, conferences are back-to-back and so short that neither teachers nor parents have time for really good conversations.

Reforms May Be Poorly Implemented

The rhetoric of school reform insists that parent involvement is important. Yet, reforms that are poorly implemented may alienate parents even more. Policymakers sometimes do more harm than good. In some places, for example, they insist on accountability but then reduce it to traditional testing programs that do not reflect changes in content and instruction. Students are being held to higher standards in classrooms, then assessed with measures that fail to reflect what they are learning. Policymakers set definitions of adequate academic progress for children served by Title I programs that would not be tolerated by more advantaged parents, yet are put forth under the banner of school improvement. Parents are blamed for student failure in poorly performing schools, then when districts and/or states take over the schools because of their performance, they recreate them with no more real parent involvement than before. So far, such takeovers do not significantly improve student achievement, according to the Education Commission of the States.

Renewed attention to parent involvement will not go far if schools continue to set the terms for it. The efforts may be well-meaning and the ultimate goal is shared by schools and parents—children and young people engaged in serious academic work. Certainly, parents are responsible for supports at home to make that possible—surrounding their children with rich opportunities to acquire language skills, making sure they are ready for school everyday and providing a learning environment at home.

Kentucky Learns that It Has Left Some Parents Behind

The state-directed reforms intended to transform education for Kentucky's children may in some cases widen rather than narrow the gap between families and schools. A study for the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, a statewide citizen group, learned from some focus groups that the reforms can increase parents' alienation from the schools. However, the friction was minimized in schools where parents were welcomed and convinced that the principal and teachers cared for their children.

The study revealed feelings that it would have been helpful to explore before the state undertook such massive changes in school organization, curriculum content and assessment of students. Awareness of the feelings might have averted some of the controversies that have erupted over the school reforms.

Parents cede most of the formal responsibility for education to the schools, yet they have strong opinions about what schools should be doing. They want teachers "to transmit to students a body of proven, tested knowledge." Parents want to be involved, but some in the focus groups said they acquiesce to the schools in defining what students will learn specifically. They may be frustrated by how schools' see parent involvement, but they don't feel adequate to making it change. That feeling of inability is a "given," says the study.

It is against this backdrop that the Kentucky reforms have tried to take hold in the public's mind. The focus groups found many parents who rarely understood the reasons for the changes in teaching and learning and felt less competent in helping their children than before. Furthermore, they believed the reforms were imposed on them and their schools. Parents have not bought into the argument that the reforms are about a better future for their children, remaining skeptical as to how the reforms will help their children get better jobs.

Yet, the study included parents whose schools have developed much more positive relationships than are reflected in the other findings. Parents in these schools feel welcome and describe principals and teachers as committed to all children and to their families. While the schools do not match parents' values completely, the relationship between schools and parents is one of "mutual respect and shared interests in the children."

Steve Kay and Rona Roberts (see Appendix A)

The literature for parents is full of such advice.

However, this definition of parent involvement has been termed by some researchers as the "transmission of school practice" model. It assumes that "the values and beliefs of schools should be transmitted passively to parents," according to the study of parent involvement in Title I schools. This may be successful with parents who share the same culture as the school, but it does not engage parents

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"What can be done on a national scale to change the dynamics of the power struggles and level the playing field in school reform? There are too many places where the power of the bureaucracy thwarts change and discourages involvement at the local level. We have to confront critical problems of turf, racism, classism and inequity without bogging down."

Kelly Butler, Parents for Public Schools, Jackson, Mississippi

Parents Report that Communications from School Go Down as Children Get Older...

How Well Does Your School Communicate with You?	All Parents	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Lets family know between report cards how child is doing—					
Very Well	57%	64%	61%	57%	49%
Helps family understand what children at this age are like —					
Very Well	35%	50%	39%	31%	23%
Provides workshops or advice about helping child learn at home					
Very Well	38%	56%	45%	31%	22%
Provides information about why child is placed in particular groups or classes					
Very Well	40%	49%	46%	37%	31%
Provides information on community services to help child or family					
Very Well	33%	43%	39%	29%	24%

And Principals Report that Parent Involvement Declines as Poverty Levels Go Up.

Percentages of Parents with Children in Grades K-12 Attending...	All Title I Schools	Poverty Levels 0-34%	35-49%	50-74%	75%+
Open House or Back to School Night					
Most or All Parents	43%	64%	49%	28%	27%
Regular Parent-Teacher Conferences					
Most or All parents	54%	73%	61%	44%	33%
Arts Events, Such as Plays or Music Performances					
Most or All Parents	32%	45%	36%	29%	13%
Sports Events, Such as Field Days					
Most or All Parents	10%	17%	11%	4%	8%
Science Fairs or Other Academic Demonstration					
Most or All Parents	18%	34%	23%	9%	3%

who rejected this culture when they were students or whose backgrounds are very different.

Parents Need Power

An increase in "passive" parent involvement cannot sustain school reform. The involvement must be rethought and redesigned. Administrators, teachers, parents and students need to be engaged together in shaping the changes needed for quality teaching and learning in every classroom. This kind of involvement empowers parents to act on behalf of their children.

Unfortunately, schools generally do not know how to share power with parents. Among the many barriers discussed at the Del Mar conference, the power issue perhaps was the core one because it must be understood and addressed before schools and parents can have any chance of becoming collaborators.

Class and Cultural Differences Divide Schools and Families

Another barrier is the "expertise" in judging families' competence people in schools acquire, like a bad habit they can't shake. Teachers sometimes blame discipline problems on lax parenting and fault parents for not attending scheduled meetings and other activities, according to national surveys. Some show disdain for parents who are not well educated.

Parents see a different set of barriers. Some studies of school-parent issues point out that the hierarchies of school organization and the isolation of teachers hinder parents' contacts at schools. Parents must deal with the pecking order when they have a problem or want information. They also learn that teachers seldom talk to each other in a traditionally organized school, making it difficult to arrive at common visions and at consensus about issues that can be conveyed to parents.

Teachers who look down on parents because they lack education ought to consider how parents feel when their only contact with schools usually is about a crisis with their child. The educational level of parents does have more to do with determining the extent of involvement at schools than any other factor. If the parents of school-age children did not complete high school, they are reluctant to return to school environments where they were unsuccessful. Their participation in school activities is much more limited than that of better educated parents and they are less confident about being able to help their children with homework. Yet, no studies reviewed for this report found that parents from even the lowest income levels were disinterested in their children's experiences at school. Studies confirm, however, that low-income parents are easily devalued in their contacts with schools. Parents in focus group interviews for the Title I study of parent involvement, for example, often defined what they wanted from the schools in one word: "respect."

It also is evident that schools frequently feel threatened by aggressive parent participation. From their study of parent involvement in 24 restructured schools, Gary Wehlage and Eric Osthoff of the University of Wisconsin/Madison found controversy was inevitable when schools opened themselves up to including parents in developing a new vision and determining what is taught. There is a risk that parents can be misguided about the school practices they attempt to influence. Still, the researchers say, "empowering parents to have some say in the education of

"The key issues in our work involve helping participants grasp the existence and implications of their belief systems; the power of these systems, and their ability to change them, and hence change outcomes for children and families. If fifty-five percent of the teachers in a system do not believe the children they serve are capable of working to high standards and achieving at world-class levels, it does little good to bring in new technology or new programs. The systems serving poor children often believe that children and families must be 'fixed' before they can learn."

Ann Bouie, Center for the Development of Schools and Communities, Oakland, California

"Much of the discussion of public will ignored the fact that the concept of public will masks very real class differences. Different segments of the public desire different outcomes, and which desired outcomes get transformed into public policy depends on which segment has the power to make claims on finite public resources. If we want genuine school reform, we have to be willing to challenge the way power works."

Steve Kest, ACORN, New York City

their children seems essential in a democratic society, and some conflict may be necessary for institutional health and vitality."

Racism Is a Fact

In many low-income schools, the Del Mar conference participants said candidly, the most formidable barrier to parent involvement is racism. Racism in personal attitudes and in public policies "must be out on the table," they said. Low expectations for students of color can be a tacit response to greater diversity among students. Academic tracking, for example, is a form of institutional racism because remedial tracks are almost always filled with children of color. Placement is not as objective as schools often claim. One study of a large California district, reported in the Education Trust data, found that 100 percent of Asian students and more than 87 percent of white students performing in the top quartile on a nationally standardized test were placed in algebra classes. Yet in the same district, only 51 percent of African-American students and 42 percent of Hispanic students scoring in the top quartile were placed in algebra classes.

In their study of 10 high schools that attempted to de-track the curriculum, researchers Jeannie Oakes and Amy Stuart Wells found that deliberate efforts and hard work opened up opportunities for low-income students and students of color. In several schools, the efforts convinced educators these students were much more capable of doing high-level work than they previously thought. However, white parents could not be convinced. Their pressures on teachers and administrators prevented the schools from dismantling tracking completely. The problem with such a compromise, say the researchers, "is that they do not force all educators, parents, or students to question a hierarchical school structure supported by a culture that values the knowledge and life experiences of some students more than others."

When school districts assign the least experienced teachers to predominantly minority schools or approve seniority rules that permit experienced teachers to be clustered in higher achieving schools, they are adopting policies that result in racist practices within the district. The cumulative effect of such practices is to create what Wehlage describes as low-resource schools or tracks where teachers do not have the knowledge or skills to institute standards-based reforms, much less explain to and engage parents in school reform efforts.

Knowing What Is Rightfully Theirs

Another barrier to parent involvement in school reforms is the lack of understanding by both educators and parents of rights, responsibilities and accountability. Uninformed parents are likely either to withdraw from contacts with schools or to create unproductive conflict. Similarly, teachers and administrators often are uninformed about parents' and students' rights. "When parents are forced to send children to large, impersonal institutions, parent involvement may mean advocacy, use of due process rights, confrontational politics and learning to manage the bureaucracy of schooling," notes Steve Jubb, executive director of the Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools. (See box, page 24)

Accountability Lags Behind Changes

What frustrates both educators and parents is the lack of accountability for student outcomes. Traditionally, standardized tests have been the only

consistent accountability tool available to them, but such test results never satisfy anyone except, perhaps, newspaper headline writers who find fodder in school-by-school test score comparisons. Standards-based reform efforts promise more relevant and authentic assessments—already a reality in some places such as Kentucky and Maryland—but perhaps have underestimated the challenge of explaining new assessment systems to parents.

A few school districts, such as Corpus Christi and San Diego, realize that their requirements for students to meet certain standards may conflict with traditional ways of reporting to parents, such as the "ABC" report cards. Corpus Christi tried to align teacher assessments of students to standards without laying a foundation among parents. The district had to delay the idea after it ran into strong resistance from parents. It then created better communication before trying the idea again.

For the most part, these formidable barriers to involvement of parents in school reforms were not set deliberately. They developed from bureaucratic bigness, lack of attention and attitudes reinforced by the lack of opportunity for education professionals to know any other way. While no group or policy is specifically to blame for the limitations on parent involvement, the result is devastating to school reform efforts.

"Just as it is unfair to hold students accountable for knowledge and skills they have not been provided a fair opportunity to learn, it is also unfair to hold teachers and schools accountable for the performance of those students unless they are given the proper resources and conditions to achieve success. We believe that capacity building is the critical link between accountability and improved student achievement."

Michael Alexander,
Annenberg Institute of School Reform,
Providence, Rhode Island

Legal Rights to Obtain a High-Quality Education

Parents whose children are in schools that don't measure up and don't provide a uniformly high quality education to all students need to know about the rights they can use to bring about change.

Rights for Children

Many laws protect a student's right to be in a school that does a good job of helping him or her to meet high standards for what all students should know and be able to do.

In schools receiving federal "Title I" funds, students have a right to a high quality education that will help them master high standards for what all students should know and be able to do. For example, students must get an "accelerated" and "enriched" curriculum so that students move ahead at a faster pace, not fall further behind. Teachers must be "highly qualified" and get training on a regular basis about how to teach this way. Students must be given effective extra individual help whenever they are having a hard time meeting any of the standards. Schools must make enough progress each year so that every student will reach the high standards.

Students with disabilities have rights to a program designed to help them meet the same high standards expected for all students. The written "IEP" (individualized education program) should spell out how the child's special needs will be addressed so that they do not pose a barrier to reaching these high standards. An IEP that assumes lower goals and does not focus on these standards is generally not legal. Nor is it generally legal to assign a student with disabilities to a low track that does not teach to these standards. These rights are protected by federal laws – the "Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act" (IDEA) and "Section 504."

Students from a different language background with limited ability to write, read, or speak English have rights to an effective program that will overcome these language barriers so that they can meet the same standards expected for all students. These rights are also protected by federal laws – the "Equal Educational Opportunities Act" of 1974 and "Title VI" of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

In schools that get federal aid for vocational or school-to-work programs, students have a right to a high quality program that integrates high-level academic and vocational skills so that students are prepared to enter four-year college as well as work. The programs must provide the students with strong understanding and experience in "all aspects of the industry" they are studying – such as planning, finance, management, and labor – not just the skills to do a single job that may not be there when they graduate. Students also have a right to the help they need to succeed in the program if they have special needs because of low income, low achievement, a disability, or limited English-language skills, or because they are trying to enter a field is not traditional for their sex. These rights are protected by the "Perkins" vocational education act and the "School-to-Work Opportunities Act."

In many states, all students are guaranteed rights to high quality education to allow them to reach the same standards expected for all students. These rights may be found in the state constitution, in school-reform laws passed by the state legislature, and in the plans the states and school districts draw up to get federal "Goals 2000" funds.

Rights for Parents:

Parents also have rights they can use to make sure that their children get this kind of high quality education.

In "Title I" schools, parents have the right to develop the program plan together with the school. Exactly how that happens should be spelled out in a parent involvement policy which the parents and the school develop together and the parents approve, including a parent-school "compact" which spells out what both the school and the parents will do to make sure the student gets a high quality education to meet the standards. Parents also are supposed to get good training and information about the program, their rights, and how their own child is doing in meeting the standards.

Parents of students with disabilities must be fully involved in deciding on the program for their child, including a full part in the evaluation of their child and in working out and approving the child's "IEP." If a school does not agree to provide the high quality education the law calls for, the parent can recover the lawyers fees and other costs involved in winning their case in a hearing or court action.

Under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, parents have rights to speak out, pass out literature, form an organization with others, peacefully demonstrate, and petition for change. Various federal laws and state procedures also spell out ways to file complaints.

Under "FERPA" (the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), parents have the right to see the information the school system and its staff keeps about their child. In most states, parents and others can also see "public records" – the information that is not specific to an individual.

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Engelhard Elementary School: *Retooling for High Standards*

Why Engelhard?

The school council at Engelhard Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky, took on the painful task of carefully analyzing achievement data. Teachers and parents identified the lowest achieving groups to be fourth and fifth grade African-American boys. The council sponsored discussions about achievement with the community, which asked for a longer school day and year, no more pull-out programs, and a stronger reading program. The school's Title I resources now support a Reading Recovery program in the primary grades, smaller class sizes in fourth and fifth grades, and a full-time science teacher. Because of parent requests, the school is now open 11 months a year. Student scores on standardized reading and math tests are now above the 50th percentile.

Four years ago, Engelhard was in bad shape. The mobility rate was 47 percent, the highest in the *state*. Near the old Louisville downtown, the school takes in students from five homeless shelters as well as from Victorian mansions that have seen better days. Almost 85 percent of the students are low-income, split almost evenly between African-American and white families. Fewer than 25 percent of its students could pass the rigorous state test at a proficient level.

Where to start? At that time, most Jefferson County public schools had set up a school-based shared decision-making process made up exclusively of school staff. Under the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), schools are now required to establish site-based decision-making councils comprised of parents, teachers, and principals. These councils have substantial control over how the school operates, including setting policy to enhance achievement, choosing the principal, selecting textbooks and instructional materials, setting the school schedule and making curriculum and instructional policy.

Starting with Data

To draw in more of the community, Engelhard's council is organized so that each member sits on a subcommittee. Furthermore, it adopted a by-law that if the parent members of the subcommittee don't attend, the group can't conduct any business. The council and its subcommittees have used their authority to steer wide-ranging school reform.

The first step was to look at their data. The planning subcommittee took effective schools training to learn how to disaggregate and analyze information about student performance. Two things stood out: the high mobility rate, and pervasive low achievement among African-American boys.

Principal Theresa Jensen and the council felt strongly that the community must be involved in solutions to these problems. The way to do that was by holding many conversations among parents, between parents and teachers and with students. An African-American father, a member of the planning committee, shared the achievement data with the faculty. In meetings with parents, teachers openly shared the information about their children's low scores. There was no finger-pointing, just frank discussion about what to do. Parents felt that African-American boys spend far too much time in school in "time-out," where they don't learn. "What are we doing that causes these boys to act out so often in school?" teachers asked.

A close look at the data showed that children were not mastering basic skills in the primary years. When they got to fourth and fifth grades, they were unable to do the higher level work and acted out their frustration. A time study showed far too many intrusions on time spent for learning in all grades.

Together the school community came up with the solution: extend the school year and completely restructure the Title I program.

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Focus on Learning

Now the school is open 11 months a year. Academic classes are held Tuesday through Friday. On Mondays, which are optional, the school holds assemblies, field trips, enrichment classes and tutoring. Ninety-five percent of the students come. "Having things like field trips and clubs on Mondays lets us focus on academics on the other four days," comments Jensen. Except for summer vacation, the school is on the same schedule as the district. If Monday is a holiday, Engelhard takes off, too.

The Title I program was a dinosaur. Children having trouble in reading and math were pulled out of class for remedial instruction, not accelerated teaching. As a result, they never caught up with their classmates. They also missed out on valuable class time. Teams of teachers met by age groups to determine what would work best for their kids. Teachers agreed to consider the needs of the children first, even if this meant that not all teams would receive the same kind of services.

The primary grades (K-3) decided to adopt the Reading Recovery program, with some modifications. The Reading Recovery teacher works with children who are behind but also coaches teachers on more effective techniques. Children are not held back, but they do spend extra time on reading instruction. Parents can decide if their children should miss art and physical education for extra reading, but they always choose reading. As soon as students catch up, they go back to the regular routine. If a child is still behind at the end of third grade, he or she will spend one more year at the primary level before moving up to fourth grade. This way, there are no longer any fourth graders who can't read.

At the intermediate level (grades 4-5), students are grouped heterogeneously, not put in "ability groups." Instead of remedial reading teachers, Title I funded an extra classroom teacher, so class size is smaller. The school now has a full-time science teacher, classrooms are stocked with math and science manipulatives and computers and every two teachers share an instructional assistant — all courtesy of Title I. All staff engage in extensive professional development in reading, math, science and technology. To bring standards into the classroom, the school report card now requires teachers to show student progress on the state standards. Students' grades are linked to the state learning goals, thus helping parents see and understand the learning connections to state test scores.

Addressing High Mobility

During the course of their many conversations about low achievement, the staff asked parents why they were not coming to school and why so many left the school. "Because we feel that you only have bad things to say about our kids," they said. "You always talk about what we need to do different for our kids to be successful in school. You act all-knowing. You talk down to us and don't take time to listen."

"Families have been turning their babies over to us and hoping for the best. Now we tell them, 'These are public schools and you are the public. This is your school system, go in and talk to the teachers — they work for you.'"

Theresa Jensen, principal
Engelhard Elementary School

"We have a much deeper appreciation and understanding of our families. We used to get in our cars and drive off to our homes every day. Now we know our families and appreciate what they are dealing with. We understand that there but for the Grace of God go I."

Theresa Jensen

To build better relationships, the staff started a "house calls" program. During the week before the August Open House, all staff, including the principal, make home visits. After dividing the attendance zone into sectors, teams of two or three go door to door, personally inviting all the families to attend the Open House. More than 90 percent of the doors open to them. "The message is that we're here to meet you and listen, on your home turf," says Jensen.

The federal McKinney Act protects the right of homeless children to go to school. Before the act was passed, the children were caught in no-one's land, ineligible to go to their former schools and unable to claim a homeless shelter as a residence. Now, homeless families can choose a school for their children and keep them there even if they find housing in a different part of town. Engelhard staff informed the families in the nearby shelters of their rights, and they have taken advantage of the law to keep their children at the school.

Dealing with the Union Contract

Doing home visits, holding school year round, keeping school in session on optional Mondays—these practices don't usually find favor with teachers unions, which are vigilant about their members' working conditions and frown on extra work that does not come with extra pay.

Because the teachers were involved deeply in all the planning for change (in fact the plans were their plans), they were willing to negotiate. Using waiver provisions, the school wrote a memo to amend the Engelhard teachers' contract — teachers will work over a whole year, not for nine months. To win the change, two-thirds of the members at the school must vote yes. The first time, it passed by 73 percent. Because of the high demands these changes have made on teachers, Jensen asked the teachers to hold a second vote at the end of the first extended school year. It passed by 94 percent.

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3. What Reforms and Why?

Schools always are changing, historians of public education point out. Sometimes, however, they embark in new directions, as reformers are pushing them to do right now.

At the beginning of this century, another generation of reformers wrestled urban schools from ward politics and corruption, creating professional administration of schools. Industrial demands affected education policies a few years later, producing high schools that provided vocational training for most students and an academic curriculum for the leadership class. This change became the basis for the academic ability tracking that exists today.

In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* struck down *de jure* racial segregation of schools. Twenty years later federal policy required the education of children with disabilities and special attention to language-minority children. These changes aimed to make public education universal and honest to its principles—to provide a "thorough and efficient" education for all students. This is the phrase used by many state constitutions to define state responsibility for education. These changes, however, caught teachers and administrators unprepared for unprecedented diversity in their classrooms and for rising expectations of higher achievement by all children.

Against a backdrop of increasing state demands that local districts be more accountable for public expenditures on education, "*A Nation At Risk*" was published in 1983. That report stimulated enormous amounts of research and policymaking. At first, reactions to "Risk" reinforced traditional practices—more required courses and longer school days and years. A second generation of reforms instituted more systemic approaches, such as linking changes in teacher education, curriculum development and assessment and greater autonomy for schools in order to improve student achievement. A third wave focuses on the quality of instruction and learning, using higher content standards and more authentic pedagogy and assessments to leverage change.

Political and business leaders, influenced by "horse race" information from international comparisons of student achievement, have weighed in with another round of demands for higher expectations of students. The two Education Summits of 1989 and 1996 set, then reconfirmed national goals ranging from young children's readiness for school to high content and performance standards for students and to adult literacy. The first Summit adopted six goals. Congress later expanded them by two—one calling for teacher professional development and the other for parent involvement.

"Habitual conversation about students' real learning needs is critical to building an achievement-oriented school community. The size, scale and complexity of most schools and districts makes this nearly impossible."

Steven Jubb, Bay Area Coalition of Effective Schools, Redwood City, California

Throughout this century's various waves of change, one factor remained constant in the schools until recently. Few students were expected to achieve very much academically. Even when high schools sought to keep students in school longer—and out of the labor market—they did so with a variety of non-academic courses and lots of extracurricular activities. Those previously victimized by segregation were treated often with sympathy and grade inflation, rarely with high expectations.

It was not until economic competition spurred business and political leaders to realize the need for higher, more complex skills that attention turned to radical changes in what and how students learn. At the same time, a rich research base on instruction and learning provided proof that all students can learn at high levels. Together, these two elements created the framework for education reform policies.

The culture of a public school system accustomed to low expectations is hard to change, however. In many places there is deep resistance to current school reform efforts. Poor children are not the only ones held back by ingrained low expectations. Except for a very small percentage of top performers, most students rarely have their minds or aspirations stretched by their teachers, textbooks or school culture. Surveys of students bear this out. The 1997 Public Agenda report, *Getting By*, found that 7 of 10 high school students believed most students would pay more attention to school if the standards were higher. Their own parents and even grandparents probably would recognize traditional classrooms of today—and so would today's teachers. Other studies tell us that teachers tend to teach as they were taught, not as they were taught to teach.

Standards-based reforms reject low expectations and call for a commitment to higher academic achievement by all students. But they do so at a time when schools are enrolling much larger percentages of students whom teachers in the past typically considered unable to meet greater academic expectations. The reforms also must contend with parents' perceptions of what schools should be about. As noted earlier, surveys of parents indicate they do not want schools to be boring, but they also do not want any changes to undermine "order, safety and the basics."

Changes In Policies

Policymakers are busy changing what they think they can influence. In addition to establishing higher and more consistent content standards for students, many states are setting definitions of how well students should know the content (performance standards) and edging toward better assessment systems. The reform efforts are strongly focused on improving teacher quality.

The 1996 report *What Matters Most* of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future lays out a policy framework for a standards-based teaching profession. The goal is to ensure that within a few years all students will be taught by qualified teachers. A dozen states have agreed to institute the report's recommendations over a five-year period, and other states are working on pieces of the standards-based reforms for teachers. These range from recruiting good candidates for teaching, including more minorities, to reforming teacher preparation, to higher quality professional development. Similarly, efforts are underway to establish standards for the preparation, hiring and

Quality Standards for Educators

Since 1989 the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has been developing assessments of "accomplished" teaching in more than 30 grade and curricular areas. Its assessments are rigorous and based on five generic standards on what teachers should know and be able to do. One of these is a teacher's role in creating learning communities. Says a description of this standard: "Accomplished teachers find ways to work collaboratively and creatively with parents, engaging them productively in the work of the school."

An Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium issued standards for school leaders in 1996. Similarly, it sets six broad standards for all administrators. Standard 4 says: "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources."

"We must prepare aspiring principals who possess the knowledge and skills to forge partnerships with families and teachers and build pathways to student excellence. They must be passionately and singularly dedicated to removing the barriers to the social, spiritual, and intellectual growth of students."

Ron Areglado, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Alexandria, Virginia

evaluation of school administrators. The Commission report urges parents to find out if their children's teachers are qualified and to push for reforms that ensure quality. In this country, veterinarians who care for pets, the report points out, are more accountable to official standards than teachers who are responsible for educating children.

Meanwhile, state policymakers seek to deal with the problem of consistently low-performing schools and districts by "reconstituting" them or assuming administrative control. About one-half of the states now have statutes allowing state officials to intervene with "academically bankrupt" school districts. However, at the same time they are taking these drastic actions, some states are adopting policies for "adequate yearly progress" of students in the poorest schools, those receiving Title I funding, that essentially would allow the schools to be low-performing for years. State takeovers tend to improve management of districts, but they also tend to sidestep fundamental changes in learning environments.

Another tool of policymakers are state assessments. The best ones are clearly based on higher standards and often require students to demonstrate their knowledge (performance assessments). This is the primary strategy of some states, as in Kentucky and Maryland, to require accountability of schools for meeting state standards. In most states, however, state assessment systems still use standardized norm-referenced exams that do not align with new content standards for students. Yet student performance on such tests may be crucial for their futures. At the second Summit in 1996, business leaders pledged to take students' high school records into consideration in their hiring policies, putting accountability on students themselves.

The Del Mar conference participants called for a strong accountability system, one that is coherent and makes parent and public participation integral to school improvement. They see this accountability system framed around seven elements:

- varied and in-depth forms of student, school and system assessments;

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"We need to design materials and presentations for talking with lower literacy parents about content and performance standards without dumbing them down. We don't want to repeat the effects of 'tracking' in our audience of low-income parents and focus their efforts on simple, low-end standards."

Paul Weckstein, Center for Law and Education, Washington, D.C.

- clearly defined and articulated purposes for assessment data, including:
  - to document whether children are meeting challenging standards;
  - to inform and modify instruction;
  - to inform and involve students and families;
  - to report to the public;
  - to engage parents and the public in a process to improve student achievement;
  - to inform and drive policymaking;
- shared accountability for results among all those concerned about student achievement;
- a comprehensive system to build the capacity of teachers, schools and districts to develop and implement effective plans to raise student achievement and to report and engage parents and the community;
- rewards and sanctions (incentives and consequences) for all concerned, along with ample and effective opportunities to learn for students;
- a qualitative system to understand and ascertain the attitudes of teachers, students, parents and communities about school change and student progress; and
- open and ongoing substantive dialogue among all those concerned.

Granted, there are many challenges involved in creating and implementing such an accountability system. The appropriate roles for each group need to be understood. Skills at using data and communicating to different consumers of information need to be refined. What kinds of encouragements (or sanctions) are needed? How do you keep the dialogue among schools, parents and the public open, substantive and ongoing? Still, it is interesting that all these elements are in place in the new Title I law and in many state education reforms, yet have not yet been fully implemented. If they were, this report might not be needed.

The environment for this century's final wave of school reform is perplexing to parents and the public in general. On the one hand, overall trends in student performance are optimistic, and President Clinton is among those telling the public there is reason for confidence in the public school system. Policies focus on com-

Parents Can Learn New Basics, Too

Parents' critical reactions to changes in math education may catch teachers off guard, according to researchers at the National Center for Research in Mathematical Sciences Education at the University of Wisconsin. In some cases, reports the center, "schools did not react until the steady stream of parents entering the principal's office forced them to do so." Parents often are uneasy with instruction that gives students more control over their own learning, concluding that such classrooms are out of a teacher's control. According to the center, however, some schools were finding ways to address parents' concerns, such as:

- **Teaching parents the math lessons in the same ways their children were learning.**
- **Sponsoring a switch day when parents attended classes on the same schedule as their children.**
- **Asking businesses to support new math programs, thereby "legitimizing" the math reforms with parents.**

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Questions Parents Can Ask About School Reforms

On higher content standards:

Who sets the standards and what went into the thinking about them? How will I learn about the standards my child is expected to meet? Do the standards reflect my values about what schools should be doing? If not, can the differences be explained to me clearly? How do the standards guarantee my child will learn necessary skills? Is the curriculum my child is learning aligned with standards he/she is expected to meet? Are the standards really meant for all students, or are some to be "excused" from meeting them? Why is it important that my child meet these standards? Does my child have the resources needed to meet them? Will my child receive the opportunity to learn and necessary support services he/she needs to attain them?

On new forms of assessments tied to standards:

Are the assessments fair and reliable? Does my child have enough experience with new forms of assessments to do well on them? Do the assessments cover what my child has been taught? Do teachers understand how to use new types of assessments well? Will my child's special educational needs be addressed and will he/she receive support services as needed in order to succeed on the assessments? How will my child whose family language is not English be assessed? Is too much time being spent on preparing for and taking tests and not enough on instruction? How can I be assured that the assessments won't be used to deny my child promotion or graduation unless he/she has gotten a program effectively designed to teach what is being tested? Is there adequate help if my child is having difficulty mastering the skills being tested? Why does a particular score on the assessment mean that a child is or is not proficient? What are examples of student work that meet or do not meet the standards? Do the assessments provide useful information concerning areas of strength and weakness to guide the school on making improvements? Do the assessments provide a range of ways to demonstrate proficiency and stimulate innovative ways of teaching and learning? Are the right tests being used for the right purposes?

On curriculum and instruction:

Do the curriculum and teaching challenge my child to think and construct knowledge? For example, is he/she manipulating information and ideas, learning how to explain and use his/her knowledge and to gain new understandings? Does my child have opportunities to explore content in depth? Does my child learn the connections between academic subjects? Is my child involved in good conversation with others that helps them all share what they know and understand how to use what they are learning beyond the school?

On teacher quality:

Are my child's teachers prepared to teach to higher standards? Is the school system constructively using new standards from professional organizations about what teachers should know and be able to do? Do they know how to meet my child's academic needs? Are my child's teachers qualified to teach the subjects they are assigned? What is their experience compared to teachers in other schools? Do all teachers in the school take responsibility for the success of all students? Are teachers committed to learning more themselves and to trying new approaches when traditional ones don't produce higher learning? Are teachers held accountable for results with their students? What happens to teachers who don't or won't hold high expectations for my child?

On school environments:

Is the school welcoming to families? Are there lots of different ways for me to be involved in my child's education through the school? Can the teachers and administrators explain clearly about the changes they are making and why? Do the teachers have opportunities for good professional development that will help my child? Does the school share data about the school with me and other parents? Are parents asked to participate in creating a vision for the school and developing the curriculum to match the vision? Do the people in the school understand the strengths of the community outside of the school and do they try to connect families and schools in genuine ways?

On resources:

Does my child have all the resources—and on time—needed to reach these higher standards? Are the textbooks current and aligned with the standards? Does my child have access to new technologies and do teachers know how to use them to deepen their teaching or are they mostly used for drilling my child on basic skills? Has the school eliminated low tracks and other grouping devices that hold some students to low expectations and watered-down curriculum and that don't teach the challenging standards expected for all? Do teachers have time to work together? Do they individualize instruction so they can intervene quickly if my child has problems with learning? Does the school know how to connect families to needed services in the community? What about support and accommodations needed to address my child's disability? Is high quality and appropriate bilingual education available for my child, if needed?

On wise use of power:

Do policies at the district and state levels encourage schools to reach out to families? Have parents been part of the process of setting state standards and new assessment policies? Who checks up on whether schools/districts are following policies about parent involvement? Are policymakers addressing resource questions, making sure that all children have what they need to meet higher academic standards? What are they doing about ensuring teacher quality? Are there processes in place for policymakers to hear what I think? Do families, students, and teachers have the authority, information and assistance they need to be full partners in developing, implementing and improving the educational program to enable all students to reach high standards?

prehensive changes in teaching and learning that affirm all students can think smarter, and states are adopting strong accountability measures to be sure they do. Yet the gap in achievement between minority and non-minority groups is growing wider. And thousands of students still suffer from the perpetuation of unequal opportunities to learn. The public hears from plenty of critics predicting public schools cannot get better.

Were this a time of traditional thinking, these issues might not be considered of prime importance to parents. However, school reforms of the magnitude needed today cannot go very far without parents' understanding and participation. In its new handbook, *The Schools We Need Now: How Parents, Families and Communities Can Change Schools*, California Tomorrow recommends that parents visit their children's schools to see first-hand the kind of education they are getting. If parents see these things in their child's classroom, children are learning to think well and handle academic work:

- There is **lots of interaction** between teachers and students; students don't just sit around and listen to their teacher.
- Students get to **ask questions** and make some choices about what they are learning.
- Students get to **work together** a lot and use a **variety of materials**.
- There is a focus on **problem-solving and figuring things out**, rather than just remembering facts.
- Students get **lots of helpful feedback** from the teacher.
- Students are **active in learning**, such as doing projects and finding information.
- Students get **extra help**, such as tutoring, if they need it.

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The Patrick O'Hearn School, Boston, Massachusetts: *Creating a School that Fully Includes Children with Disabilities*

Patrick O'Hearn is a small public school in Boston serving 220 children from early childhood programs through grade 5. This inclusive school takes special pride in its diversity. At least 25 percent of its students have disabilities; many of the disabilities are significant, such as mental retardation, autism, and cerebral palsy. About 55 percent of the students are African-American, 34 percent are white, 11 percent are either Asian or Hispanic. More than two-thirds of the school's students receive free or reduced price school lunches.

In September 1989, the school opened as a full inclusion school after activist parents demanded that their children with disabilities have more integrated placement options. Today, the O'Hearn School serves all students, including those with mild, moderate and severe disabilities, in integrated classrooms. Teachers, providers of support services and parents work together to ensure that all children learn.

The school's focus is on primary literacy, with proficiency expected in listening, speaking, reading and writing. One of the school's key goals is to have all students read at grade level by the third grade. The school uses Boston's Citywide Learning Standards as a tool for improving student achievement in listening, speaking, reading and writing. O'Hearn teachers and staff adapt instruction and teaching strategies to help students with diverse needs, including those with mild, moderate and severe disabilities, meet the standards. They also use thematic instruction, technology, cooperative learning strategies, instruction in the arts and a strong home-school connection to improve educational performance.

Why O'Hearn?

O'Hearn exists because activist parents insisted on a school that fully included students with disabilities. It is a member of the League of Responsive Schools, affiliated with the Institute for Responsive Education in Boston. The school emphasizes literacy with a goal of having all children learn to read by third grade. It uses the Boston Citywide Learning Standards to upgrade the curriculum and improve teaching. Parent training informs families about the standards and what children are learning. The school-based management council involves families in all major decisions. The Family Center has a strong family outreach program, arranging events that draw families into the school, making home visits and offering assistance when families need and request it.

Exposing Families to Standards

Parents learn about the new standards-based curriculum in a variety of ways. In classroom newsletters, teachers share with parents task descriptions of what their children are expected to learn through classroom activities. At the annual fall Open House, teachers share with parents who are visiting their children's classrooms examples of their children's ongoing work products that are designed to improve literacy skills. Parents not only see first hand what their children are doing, but they are able to make the connection between what they are doing in the classroom and what they are expected to know and be able to do.

During the 1996-97 school year, the school's Standards Facilitator presented a workshop for parents about standards in general. She also focused on how standards in English and language arts, in particular, translated into improved literacy for all students. In September of the following school year, a new parent coordinator, who happens to be a parent of an O'Hearn child, began to provide families with information and training about the Citywide Learning Standards.

The school itself is organized into instructional teams across grade levels. Each team consists of regular and special education teachers, therapists and specialists. The teams meet on an ongoing basis throughout the school year to

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address curricula and teaching concerns and to monitor student performance on work projects designed to teach specific skills. Teachers of special education modify work products and adapt instructional strategies, as necessary, to help students with disabilities achieve. One member of each instructional team participates with the principal and parent representatives on the Instructional Leadership Team, which addresses curriculum and instructional issues affecting the school.

In the 1996-97 school year, a special Instructional Team consisting of four teachers from different grade levels, a specialist and a parent was formed to explore portfolio assessment. After gathering data from staff and parents, investigating what other schools are doing and developing a consensus about what a portfolio should contain, the team made specific recommendations to the School Based Management Council about portfolio design. The Council, including parents, teachers, specialists and staff, continued to explore issues concerning the use of portfolio assessment the following fall.

Meanwhile, the regular instructional teams continue to be heavily involved in addressing some significant assessment issues. Over the last seven years, O'Hearn students' average median scores on the Stanford 9 test, with the exception of one year, have shown significant annual gains in reading and math. However, the instructional teams recognize, by evaluating individual students' work, that much still needs to be done to ensure that O'Hearn students learn the information and skills they need to reach higher standards. The instructional team members must identify students' performance gaps and identify and implement instructional strategies and curriculum supplements or alternatives necessary to address the gaps.

Roles that Families Play

The O'Hearn School has a strong School Based Management Council, which reflects the school's view of education as an ongoing collaborative process involving the entire school community. The Council, which develops policies and participates in hiring decisions, actively solicits input through the school's family outreach program and family resource center.

The principal and staff recognize and openly acknowledge the significant role that parents are playing in improving the quality of education at O'Hearn. Today, more than 90 percent of O'Hearn's parents visit their children's teachers at least twice during the school year. The principal, William Henderson, gives special credit to the hard-working parents who are so committed to improving their children's learning and achievement. He emphatically declares: "This is a tribute to the Outreach Group and the effectiveness of the parent-to-parent relationships they have built with many of the school's families."

To Henderson and the teachers and staff of the O'Hearn School, it is clear that the more active parents acted as a bridge between home and school, and they made it possible for the less engaged families to become more connected. In the early 1990s the Family Outreach Group was started by a group of parents to make home visits to families who had little or no contact with the

"There is a shared assumption that anytime this school takes on something significant, parents will be involved."

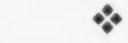
William Henderson, principal

school. Yet, it did not take long before a broader, more active agenda evolved. First, the parent members decided to pay home visits to all new families and to welcome them to the school community with a book as a gift. Next, they started a monthly school-wide newsletter, the O'Hearn Star, which describes learning opportunities in the school and the community, discusses school happenings, publishes a monthly calendar and features children's work.

In addition to setting up a telephone tree, The Family Outreach Group organizes workshops and evening forums, sets up classroom breakfasts and pizza suppers before the school's twice yearly Open Houses, and makes transportation and site-based school child care available. To support the school's literacy efforts, individual members of the Outreach Group visit families who have not returned their home reading contracts. If families request it, they will also help them implement the home reading program, which involves families in children's reading assignments.

Results

It is not surprising to anyone associated with this very special community school today that attendance and discipline problems are virtually nonexistent at O'Hearn. Students and staff have attendance rates of 95 and 98 percent, respectively. Suspensions are rare (only 1 in 1996-97), and most students are working at or above grade level. Nor is it surprising that the O'Hearn School, with its obvious pride in serving a diverse population in an inclusive and challenging learning environment, is one of the schools most often selected through the controlled choice plan governing the Boston public school system.



4. Different Ways to Involve Parents, Different Results

School change and transformed policies and practices toward parent involvement go hand in hand. Reforms intended to improve the achievement of all students cannot be accomplished within schools alone. That is the premise of this report. Nor will they succeed where schools remain hierarchical rather than collaborative and fail to support the development of teachers' capacities to change practice.

Such schools are like fortresses, the Del Mar conference participants agreed. They throw up barriers not only to change but also to listening to and working with their parents and communities. By contrast, those at the conference drew from their experience of successful efforts at involvement to create a framework for engaging parents in school reform—to describe schools for the 21st century. The framework is based on these themes:

- Build on strengths of parents and of communities, recognizing the contributions families can make through their traditions, culture, language and knowledge of their community.
- Address the effects of race, class and cultural differences on relationships between schools and parents.
- Ensure that the school's mission is concerned with the well being of families and connects them to services and supports they need.
- Consider student academic success to be everyone's responsibility—no blame, no excuses.
- Provide opportunities to change behaviors toward collaboration and acceptance of shared roles, knowing that changed attitudes will follow.
- Involve all within the school family in defining the reforms and setting priorities.

The profiles in this report exemplify the principles in the framework. They reject the practices of a "fortress school" and are moving toward being a 21st century school where "school community" means just that—a community of teachers, parents and students working and learning together. Moving from the traditional school to an open, inclusive and dynamic school will require profound changes in policies and practices on a large scale. Just as schools cannot proceed with needed reforms without their communities, they cannot get far either unless they operate in a context of district and state policies that encourage them to change and to be more inclusive. (Many of these ideas have been included in the new parent involvement policy adopted by the Minneapolis school district. See Appendix C.)

Lessons from Parent-School Efforts at Reforms

Many of those present at the Del Mar conference offered lessons learned from their own experiences in

A Framework for Parent Involvement in School Reform

For Full Parent Involvement	Fortress Schools
Clear vision of school change	• Principal and senior teachers set the school's goals and mission, determine changes to take place. • Other staff informed after decisions are made. Families learn through the newsletter or at Open House. • School invests in children most likely to succeed.
Trusting relationships among families, staff and students	• School staff and families occupy separate spheres. Each "trusts" the other to do its job. • One-way communications reinforce the agreement. • Staff and families encounter each other at a few large events and at parent-teacher conferences. • Meetings are by appointment.
Information and tools for full participation	• School sends a monthly newsletter and school discipline handbook home, in English only. • Motivated parents may see information about the school or their children's records if they request the handbook. • Data on student achievement is for school use only.
Meaningful participation in all aspects of school	• Parents are expected to reinforce at home what children learn at school and volunteer to help school staff. • Parent organization meets once a month. Teachers rarely attend, and principal gives short reports.
Supportive policy	• School recognizes rights of families to be involved in minimal implementation of Title I, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other laws.

For Full Parent Involvement	21st Century Schools
Clear vision of school change	• Families, staff, community, and students all participate in developing a child-centered vision for the school. • High standards are set for all children and carried out in all classrooms. • All children have ample opportunities to learn to the high standards.
Trusting relationships among families, staff and students	• School staff tour the neighborhoods, learn about families' cultures. • School "maps" the community to identify local groups and institutions, works with them as partners. • Social events for families and staff held often, at convenient times. • School structure allows for constant conversation about student progress and the educational program. • School is open year-round, has a family resource center, and hosts community events.
Information and tools for full participation	• School fully shares data on student progress with community, continually uses data to improve academics. • Staff development sessions open to families. • Families learn how school system works, take leadership training, build advocacy skills. • Family center offers adult education, literacy and job training, referrals to social services. • Continuous conversations about concerns and issues.
Meaningful participation in all aspects of school	• Parents develop agendas for what they want, are recognized as experts. • Families are included and honored in classroom, curriculum, and teaching materials. • School provides services and activities that are enjoyable, inspiring and culturally appropriate. • Families monitor children's progress, advocate for their fair treatment, and take part in all major decisions about the school.
Supportive policy	• Family involvement part of written school policy (e.g. handbook) and daily practice. Policy is not reversible. • Policy is developed with and approved by parents. • Policy spells out how parents will be partners, what training school will offer, and how funds for parent involvement will be spent. • Resources are available for transportation, child care, space to meet, access to telephone, supplies and copying.

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Vaughn Street School: *A Full Service School*

"The total transformation of this school would never have been possible without the wholehearted involvement of our families and community. We have done this for, with, and through them."

Yvonne Chan, Principal

In 1990, the Vaughn Street School was considered one of the worst in the Los Angeles area. The school serves a high-crime neighborhood where families live in crowded apartments, garages and trailers. Nearly 100 percent of its students are from low-income families, and almost 95 percent are Latino. In 1991, the turnover rate was 79 percent, and student test scores were dismal. The Los Angeles Police Department surveyed drug activity from the kindergarten classrooms. It was so overcrowded that students attended classes in shifts. The former principal received death threats and left in March of 1990.

Yvonne Chan, the new principal, arrived that May with three assigned security guards. There was nowhere to go but up. Teachers, administrators, parents, community members and support staff pulled together. Through a long series of meetings, conversations, discussions and retreats, they identified three principles around which to organize their new school:

1. Put Children First.
2. Unleash and connect all human capacities to get the job done.
3. Dream big, plan long-term, and think can-do!

Although the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center has only recently focused on improving achievement, students scored at or above the national average on the Aprenda test in reading (53 percent), math (50 percent) and language (53 percent) in 1996. Now a public charter school, it has been completely reorganized:

- A governing council makes decisions for the whole school complex. Fifty percent of its members are parents.
- A pre-kindergarten school readiness program starts with home-based instruction for two-year-olds and extends through a language development program for four-year-olds.
- At the Family Center, families gain access to health and social services, educational programs, English classes and a service exchange bank. The Center is open year-round and offers after-school and vacation programs for students.
- The advocacy program for at-risk students provides small group, individual and family counseling so that students can receive the extra attention and support they need to learn.
- Teachers with special expertise become lead teachers. All staff have common planning time each week and take part in the teacher center, workshops, peer coaching and on-site training.
- Teaching is interdisciplinary and emphasizes critical thinking and problem-solving. Students learn using hands-on materials and do projects in small groups.
- Outreach workers ensure that many parents take part in education programs and school governance and organize the community around important issues.

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advocacy for parent empowerment. They are helping schools to make this transformation, despite the barriers. The Institute for Responsive Education, for example, is working with clusters of K-12 schools in eight districts serving predominantly low-income families. Engaging the communities in good discussions about what competencies students will need for work, citizenship and life-long learning, IRE reports, can sharpen the focus of schools and parents on improving both instruction and assessment. This confirms several other research studies that found when parents look at and try to do high-content assignments of their children, such as taking teacher-prepared assessments based on new standards, they understand better and are more willing to support greater expectations for their children.

Deciding what is most important for students to learn is the core of parent and teacher conversations in schools participating in the Coalition of Essential Schools. As one Coalition leader said about the network's schools: "We find that habitual parent-teacher-community conversations about real students' learning needs and the work they really do provides a way to come to consensus on what matters most. Such conversation creates the real partnership and trust required to help students engage powerfully and successfully in important work."

The Texas Testament to Parent Involvement

How is it that a group of low-income schools throughout Texas can outperform most schools on the state's test of academic skills? The Dana Center at the University of Texas spent a lot of time in 26 schools identified as high-achieving but enrolling at least 60 percent low-income students. Most had over 75 percent of students meeting the free or reduced-price lunch criteria. The researchers wanted to know why students in these schools could attain a 70 percent passing rate on the reading and math sections of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. Few schools in Texas had reached this level of achievement in 1995; in fact the achievement at these schools was among the highest of all schools in the state. Actually, more than 50 such schools in rural and urban areas were identified, but the Dana Center's resources limited the study to a smaller sample.

There is no magic formula for academically successful schools that serve poor and/or minority children, the researchers found. Some schools adopted model programs or used new technologies extensively. Others did neither. Some pushed phonics, others centered on whole language approaches. They did have several themes in common, however. Foremost, every decision they made and every resource they used focused on the academic success of every student. Second, the teachers were aware of the difficult situations the students lived in, but they were determined there would be no excuses for failure. Instead of using students' family and community situations as reasons for poor performance, teachers came up with creative ways of teaching each student. They did whatever was needed.

These themes meant that teachers and administrators knew their students well. They could work with them individually because of two other themes:

- **"Inclusivity:" everyone is part of the solution.** Anyone who came in contact with a student was a part-

"Involve the community in goal-setting through focus groups and town meetings. Most schools report a dramatic increase in parent attendance for school events after having gone through the focus group process. Asking the community to think about what competencies students will need for work, citizenship, life-long learning, and personal growth sharpens the focus on improving instruction and assessment of students' skills."

Tony Wagner, Institute for Responsive Education, Boston, Massachusetts

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ner in the school's mission. This extended to all support personnel—it was not unusual for secretaries to be listening to students read—and it required special relationships with parents. The schools did not wait for parents to become involved. They used many ways to reach out to families and constantly encouraged and supported parent involvement in their children's education. Open-door attitudes prevailed, and "school personnel assumed responsibility for creating an environment in which parents wanted to become involved."

- **Sense of family.** The most common metaphor for these successful schools was the school as a family, the researchers found. What would concern parents—health, behavior, respect for children—also were the concerns of the school. Just as students were valued, so were their parents. "Parents at these schools knew they were welcome; they knew that they belonged as part of the school family," according to the researchers. Even when parents were having trouble being parents, teachers respected the challenges they faced and "focused more on seeking solutions than on blaming parents for the academic or social difficulties that students encountered."

When Shown Examples of Student Work, Parents Prefer Open-Ended Questions

A 1995 study of parent attitudes toward a common education reform, performance-based assessments, found that parents prefer the new open-ended questions to multiple-choice standardized test questions. Lorrie Shepard and Carribeth Bliem first asked third-grade parents how much they relied on standardized test scores for information about their children's progress. Overwhelmingly, parents said they favored conversations with their children's teacher and report cards over test scores.

Then the researchers showed parents examples of third-grade test questions. While most parents approved of both types of questions, the majority preferred the open-ended questions, especially in reading. Even parents who said they favored multiple-choice tests because they are more "clear cut" and "easier," liked the way open-ended questions "stimulate the imagination" and "make you think."

The researchers found that parents are most receptive when the reforms are not "radical," keeping standardized tests but adding the new ones, and when they can look at the problems and how children solve them. Most were intrigued by the questions, took time to look at them carefully, and were satisfied that the material was challenging and worth learning.

Parents are more likely to be reassured if they see problems like: "If you couldn't remember what 8 x 7 is, how could you figure it out?" or "How would you pick four digits to make the largest sum?" than if reformers lead with calculator use in the early grades. The researchers conclude that "even considering all the contending views...there is a large common ground on which to build support for reform." (See Appendix A for more information on this study.)

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There were other themes—willingness to experiment to find what works for each child, trust and ability to collaborate and a passion for learning and growing. In these, too, parents were central, helping to create "communities of learners." (Laura Lein, Joseph F. Johnson, Jr., and Mary Ragland, *Successful Texas Schoolwide Programs: Research Study Results*. See Appendix A for a full summary.)

Parents Central to Successful National Efforts

This report advocates parent involvement like that in the Texas schools, where it is central to school reform. It is not a "program" that becomes an add-on to reform efforts. This point is affirmed in some of the most successful interventions adopted by schools, especially those in low-income neighborhoods. These are various outside intervention efforts, but collectively they underscore the importance of parent involvement to student achievement.

For example, parent involvement is a central component of the School Development Program, a school-wide restructuring project of Dr. James Comer and the Yale Child Study Center. Through teams composed of the principal, teachers, parents, a mental health specialist and support staff, schools develop master plans for supporting the academic and social needs of all students. When implemented well, the School Development Program has shown it can increase student achievement in comparison to similar schools. Parents receive training along with teachers, and at many of the sites parents are hired as aides.

Success for All, also a school-wide reform program, focuses on reading success in the early grades. It includes family support services to increase parent involvement and to help with home-based problems, such as attendance, that interfere with learning to read. Success for All uses a parent liaison and attendance monitor. Based on extensive research, the program combines a number of strategies to help children enjoy learning to read such as regrouping, frequent assessments and individualized instruction. This is not the rote and drill learning most parents remember, although it is structured. Despite the different look to learning to read, parents like the program and are kept informed through the programs outreach efforts. Success for All improves student achievement, reduces retention and special education assignments and increases attendance.

Accelerated Schools is a national model that has been adopted by schools with very diverse enrollments. It provides an enriched, accelerated curriculum for students who are behind, replacing remedial classes where they never catch up with other students. Its approach empowers parents (and teachers and students as well) through giving them responsibility for learning. Parents help govern the school through inclusion on "cadres" or committees, focus groups and whole-school meetings. They work in classrooms and perform the traditional fund-raising and support functions, but they also select their children's teachers and are consulted about placement. Not dependent on outside staff or extensive technical assistance, the Accelerated Schools draw from the strengths of their own teacher and parent resources to give students much more challenging work. As with the Comer project, where implemented well, student achievement improves in the Accelerated Schools.

> *"The combination of high authentic pedagogy in classrooms and expanded home-school partnerships is the most direct way to accelerate student achievement."*
>
> **Judy Pfannenstiel, Research and Training Associates, Overland Park, Kansas**

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Slowe Elementary School: *A Community Focused on Literacy*

"This school has always been a high performing school. The teachers and families expect it." says Kaye Williams, principal for the past six years at Slowe Elementary School in the District of Columbia. Most of its students come from low-income housing along busy Rhode Island Avenue. Almost 100 percent of its students are low-income and African-American. Still the achievement is high and climbing. On standardized tests, students' scores are well above the national average: 82 percent are at grade level or above in reading, 83 percent in math. The enrollment is going up, too.

"My first day of school here, I noticed that parents were lined up *across* the street as the children came in. I walked over and said 'What are you doing over here? Come on in.'" Williams remarks. "I encouraged them to visit the classes, and my door is always open." That first year, several teachers expressed their discomfort with this change. The previous principal had run a tight ship. Parents were expected to help their kids at *home*, and teachers were to teach and stay in their rooms. Now, the school is full of parents and grandparents, in the office and classrooms, around the halls and in the library where the family center is housed.

"I want this to be a school where I would be comfortable as a parent, and where my child would be comfortable. I encourage my staff to place their children in this school," Williams states emphatically. How many do? Of the 56 teachers, support staff, and aides, about 25 have children or grandchildren at Slowe.

Some of the major changes at Slowe include:

- The Comer School Development Program is the umbrella for school reform. The School Restructuring Team (which includes parents) has developed consensus and a coherent plan. The subcommittes also include parents.
- The child-centered environment focuses on engaging children and making school as interesting as possible. Instruction is based on sound principles of child development, with learning centers, cooperative learning and independent projects.
- The school community has a major emphasis on reading. All children learn to read by the end of third grade and to enjoy reading. The entire school community reads at least 30 minutes every day. Last year, the community read 220,000 books.
- The Title I program supports school-wide reform including a Saturday Academy for families and students 11 weeks in a school year.
- The school has an open door policy at all times and operates a Parent Center based in the school library.

Although the school has a "continuous progress" policy, which does not hold children back, third and fifth grades are check points. Before they can move up to fourth grade, students must know how to read well. Fifth grade is a second check-point. Teachers know this and identify students who need extra help well in advance so they will be ready for the next grade. "We want to be sure our children have mastered all the basic skills before they go on to middle school or junior high," says Williams. "I visit every classroom every day. And my door is open all day."

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A three-year study of some of these programs by The Johns Hopkins University Center for the Social Organization of Schools concluded that students placed at risk of academic failure "are capable of achieving at levels that meet and perhaps exceed current national averages, and strategies for making this happen are already in place in some schools." Implementation, however, is tough to do, and a school needs to build full and active support of administrators, teachers and *parents*. In fact, says the Center's study, "a large part of the effectiveness of a particular program was determined by the willingness of members of the school, district, and community to undertake the particular reforms."

The study also found that none of the secondary schools achieved full implementation of any of the reform programs, including the Coalition of Essential Schools which focuses on secondary education. Consequently, none produced a consistent pattern of achievement gains. As noted earlier, there is a steep drop off in parent involvement once children reach middle schools. This is accepted as inevitable by the schools, but, as Joyce Epstein notes from her research, it is at this point when schools should develop even more sophisticated ways of involving parents. As the learning environments become more complex, parents need greater, not fewer, opportunities to keep in close contact with schools.

For the record, when searching for schools to profile for this report, we found few examples of exemplary parent involvement at the middle or high school level. We found even fewer secondary schools that had improved student achievement by building parent involvement into their reform efforts. Other researchers have reported similar findings. Secondary schools are lagging behind elementary schools in adopting reforms, according to several studies, and apparently have much work to do on finding better strategies for involving families.

The message from all the research and examples used in this report is quite clear: when schools and families work together, children succeed academically. As *A New Generation of Evidence* points out, the income and social status of a child do not determine how well she or he will do in school, or in life. More important is whether family members create a home environment for learning, express high expectations for their children and become involved in their children's education (not just school activities) at the school and in the community. Where schools routinely place low-income and minority children in lower ability groups, parent interventions can raise schools' expectations for these children and increase their opportunities to learn at higher levels.

Furthermore, the studies reviewed for that report produce evidence that when schools help parents develop these conditions for learning, "children from low-income families and diverse cultural backgrounds approach the grades and test scores expected for middle-class children." The students also are prepared for a full range of options after high school. Consider the impact on schools if large numbers of low-income families began to insist that their children be placed in higher-level classes. Then consider the impact on families if schools responded and fully supported families to become more involved in their children's learning.

"We believe that despite all the reform rhetoric and effort of the past decade or two, most American classrooms are still pretty much the same as they have been for generations. That is, most are teacher-centered, not learner-centered; most learning is still pretty much skill-and-drill, not constructivist; most academic content is still unconnected to the lives and interests of children. To boot, low-income and minority children typically get the most harsh and regimented, the most skill-and-drill versions of public schooling. We believe that quality, comprehensive educational reform has yet to materialize for the vast majority of children in this country, and that poor kids are getting the least exposure to it."

Eric Schaps and Rosa Zubizaretta, Developmental Studies Center

P.S. 261, Brooklyn, New York: *A School Designed By Parents*

Why P.S. 261?

In this low-performing neighborhood school with a magnet gifted program, activist parents purposefully chose a new principal who supported creating new schools-within-a school. Teachers and parents worked together to design and open the New Program, an open classroom school where students receive the same high-quality curriculum and teaching as those in the gifted program. Next, another group of parents and teachers opened an early childhood program, the Children's Learning Collaborative. Last, the remaining teachers and parents in the old school revitalized their program, calling it the Multi-Cultural Learning Connection. As a result, P.S. 261 is now a campus of four small schools, each created and run by a teacher-director and a steering committee of parents and teachers. Student test scores are now above average and climbing.

In 1987, P.S. 261 was a typical school in a polyglot corner of Brooklyn. Even on simple standardized tests, fewer than a third of its students could read at "grade level." To increase enrollment and improve the scores, the Community School District #15 (New York City has 32 such districts) had earlier installed a magnet "gifted" program, now called the Discovery Program. In a narrow sense, the program had succeeded by attracting middle-class white students whose parents were moving into the gentrifying sections of Boerum Hill. But the program operated as a select school-within-a-school.

Now P.S. 261 is a school building that houses four different, but closely connected schools, designed and run by teacher-directors and boards of parents and teachers. Although 54 percent of the students qualify for free lunches, their test scores have steadily gone up. In reading, over 50 percent perform at or above the national average; in math, almost 66 percent are at or above average. Now that the district has adopted new, high standards, the principal plans to raise achievement much further. How did this happen?

During the late '80s in New York City, many new ideas had begun percolating through the system. The city's strong network of community groups and education organizations were looking at new schools that had sprung up in Manhattan's Community School District #4. The flagship was Central Park East, founded by Debbie Meier, who later won a MacArthur award for her work. One early visitor was Arthur Foresta. "When I saw Central Park East, I was able to visualize what a school could be like," he said.

At that time, Foresta was a coordinator of special projects in the District #15 office, working on the Brooklyn New School, the first "alternative school" outside Manhattan. In many cities, the term alternative school refers to settings where children with problems are sent, but in New York City it has a more positive meaning. It's a term for schools that are small, child-centered, and often teacher-run, very different from the standard large and institutional public school. Progressive-minded parents in the P.S. 261 community wanted to open such a school and lobbied the District #15 board to make Foresta principal.

The New Program

During his first year on the job, Foresta circulated a proposal among the school staff to create a new school within the school. Hispanic and African-American parents said they wanted a program for their children that looked like the gifted program—but didn't require them to go downtown to a special office to apply. A group of white parents wanted an innovative program with a multi-cultural mix of students. Several teachers came forward and expressed interest. With an equal number of parents they formed a steering committee. It developed the mission and a plan for the school. In 1988, The New Program opened with 100 students. The grade structure was K-4, kindergarten, first, and second grades and a mixed-age third and fourth grade.

Students were selected by lottery, using a matrix to achieve a balance by gender, race and ethnicity. The classes were about one-third Hispanic, African-American, and white. Later, an Arabic-Asian category would be added. At

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first, the school recruited outside the P.S. 261 attendance area. In recent years, neighborhood children more than fill the available slots.

In 1988, a visitor to the school found a building with three different wings. In the first wing, the classrooms were arranged in work stations, with children working at tables on different projects. Teachers and parent aides went from table to table, encouraging the students and guiding their work. Students' art was all over the walls, and the rooms were full of books, tapes, blocks, fish tanks, toys and things that looked like an abacus (called math manipulatives). Nearly all these children were white.

In the second wing, the classrooms looked just like those in the first wing. Children were happily engaged in learning, most in small groups. On the surface, it looked a bit chaotic, but after a few minutes you could see that all the students were busy reading, counting, building, drawing, listening to tapes or talking about a project. What was the difference? Most of these children were of color.

Upstairs was a sharp contrast. In the classrooms, desks arranged in straight rows all faced the front. Half-drawn shades dimmed the windows. Library posters and commercial art covered the bulletin boards. The teachers talked at the blackboard in front, while students dozed in their seats or passed notes. It was very quiet. These students were also mostly African-American and Hispanic. Parents put their kids in this school because it looks like the school they went to. It's orderly and the teacher is in complete control.

How well did these three schools co-exist? Uneasily at first. The teachers who did not move to The New Program or the Discovery Program formed a club called "The Dinosaurs." At staff meetings and in hallway conversations, they let the principal and other teachers know that they were not comfortable with the new arrangement. This initiated a series of discussions throughout the school about the best way for students to learn. The old-style teachers worried that more progressive approaches don't work for students who need structure and must be carefully monitored to stay on task. In reaction, The New Program teachers worked hard to make their program more rigorous. In 1989, parents and teachers took part in a Summer Institute sponsored by the Center for Collaborative Education. Later, the New Program joined the Center, a network that supports New York City's small public schools.

"Parents in the Discovery Program and the Children's Learning Collaborative worked with teachers and the Brooklyn Exploratory Network (an Annenberg-funded group) to look at different math curricula. We wanted to improve how math is taught and enrich the program so that no student falls through the cracks. As a result, we bought a new set of math manipulatives, and the teachers got some excellent training. This wasn't change for the sake of change, but thoughtful school improvement."

Leslie Kirby, parent and co-president, P.S. 261 PTA

The Children's Learning Cooperative and the Multi-Cultural Learning Connection

The New Program was just the beginning. Foresta continued to encourage teachers and parents to work together, offering time to meet and resources to explore their ideas. Out of all the discussions, interest groups formed. They studied dual language programs, alternative assessments, arts in education and a curriculum to study New York City. One group that looked at the Primary Language Record, a tool to adjust the curriculum by reflecting on student behavior, decided to start an early childhood program. Foresta gave them a green light, and they began planning a developmental program to promote children's active engagement in learning.

"Whenever teachers needed substitutes, I got them. I gave them time and resources to meet, take classes or confer with outside consultants. They could pick from the menu or go a la carte. What they did was up to them. As professionals, I expected them to figure it out. Still, I think the most powerful form of professional development is ongoing collaboration with their colleagues."

Arthur Foresta, former principal P.S. 261

"The most amazing thing is that this is truly a neighborhood school. Many teachers live here, and every one with a school-aged child has placed that child in this school. This is a powerful statement of trust in themselves and their colleagues. They truly feel that this school is good enough for their own children."

Judi Aronson, principal P.S. 261

The process was similar to that for The New Program, with parents taking part on a steering committee and subcommittees. The Children's Learning Cooperative opened in September 1992 and covered kindergarten through second grades. It now has about 250 students and two or three classes per grade. Even more than the Discovery Program, it has attracted young families to the school.

Soon, the other teachers realized that the "regular school" faced certain extinction. As a result of the continuing conversations (and arguments) over the new schools, they began experimenting and changing their practices. With Foresta's encouragement, they visited new programs and schools around the city. One of the first practices they tackled was tracking. Each spring, the grade-level teachers used to meet, categorize the students by skill level (low, medium, and high) and assign each group to a teacher. A visitor looking though the classroom doors could tell instantly which class was which by the level of activity and engagement in the room.

Starting with the early elementary grades, the traditional teachers began instead to divide the different levels of students equally among classes. After four or five years, all grades were heterogeneously grouped. Student achievement has steadily climbed, despite the district's switch to more rigorous tests. As teachers learned to work with mixed skill levels, they changed their approach to teaching. For example, they moved from a basal reading program with workbooks to a literature-based system that used a whole language approach. They also began to use math manipulatives and hands-on approaches to science. Teachers identified new skills they wanted to acquire and found opportunities within the district or city to learn them.

At last, they were ready to define a mission and an identity for their school. They called it the Multi-Cultural Learning Connection, for grades 3-6. It opened in September 1995. Built around an interdisciplinary program called "Making Connections," it uses novels for children to connect English with other subjects, from social studies to science. Students read the books and work on projects, then go on field trips and write about their experiences.

Transition

All too often, when schools are transformed, they revert to their old ways when the principal changes. This has not happened at P.S. 261. The school community truly governs the school and selected the next principal. The new principal, Judi Aronson, is as deeply committed to the campus idea as Foresta. She has two main goals. The first is to continue improving achievement so that all students are achieving at high levels. The district has adopted the New Standards Project standards, and all schools will be aligning their curriculum and tests to those standards.

Her second goal is to find the right balance between preserving the identity of each small school and developing the sense of whole-school community. As a parent, Leslie Kirby, put it, "My kids (ten and three) feel part of something small and special. But they don't feel that they're missing out because they still belong to the whole school."

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5. Building the Foundation

A strong foundation for school reform needs:

- ***a national campaign to emphasize the importance of grassroots involvement in designing, implementing and ensuring school reforms;***
- ***support for such a campaign that creates networks, information sharing, and collective advocacy;***
- ***support for constant monitoring and reporting on progress with school reforms in communities with the greatest challenges and fewest resources;***
- ***development of appropriate accountability measures at school, district and state levels that ensure students have opportunities to learn at higher levels; and***
- ***strong focus on developing the capacities of teachers, parents and schools to carry out the necessary transformation of learning for students.***

The only way to move effective school reforms from isolated efforts to universally available quality education is to base them on grassroots understanding and support among parents and communities. Policymakers, educators, reformers and researchers cannot "go to scale" with restructuring of schools on their own. Nor should they.

Creating collaborations will be tough to do, considering the strong pull of current practices that essentially leave parents out of the process of change. This gulf between schools and parents, according to participants at the Del Mar conference, makes their work in communities very difficult. Because of it, in many places school people and parents seldom have significant conversations about important things. Often it is because they do not share a common language about the education of children. Mistrust based on socio-economic differences, conflicting cultural values, unspoken fears and structures that inhibit sharing also keep them apart. Probably the most compelling reason for the gulf is that the good results for students from school and parent collaboration are either not understood or not respected.

How do we make that gulf disappear and get on with reforms that can help every child in every school? Preceding the Del Mar conference, participants identified the approaches that are most effective for their work, and the conference discussions built upon these ideas. They focused on three strategies necessary to create grassroots support for school reforms:

- **mobilizing** parents and others to push for school reforms;
- **developing policy and accountability systems** that ensure all students have the chance to succeed academically at high levels; and
- **building the capacity** of schools, teachers, school systems and communities to provide a quality education.

"How can we strengthen the reciprocal relationship between schools and communities, making schools active leaders in community work, and communities active sites for learning? We need examples of asset-based work in low-income communities where community and schools work together on revitalizing schools and community."

Anne Hallett, Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, Chicago, Illinois

These strategies are all connected. For example, both the development and use of demanding professional standards for teachers and school administrators are part of a capacity-building strategy and an accountability strategy. Grassroots mobilization can help make sure these standards are taken seriously as an obligation of good practice that educators owe to the children in their professional care.

Mobilizing for Reforms

Where a school, parents and the community are genuinely working together on school reforms, one would find:

- a school with a clear vision about how it will ensure high student achievement and with agreement on its goals and strategies among the staff;
- a school that includes parents in creating the vision and strategies, is respectful of parent participation and provides multiple ways for parents to be involved;
- a school that considers time working with parents to be well spent and makes this part of its mission and of its schedule;
- a school where all parents, not just the most active ones, fully understand the purposes and nature of school reforms and also believe they can have a meaningful role in assuring that their children meet the standards;
- a school that is constantly and openly evaluating how well it is reaching its goals and implementing its strategies;
- a school supported by district policies and practices that welcome feedback and provide clear, consistent information to schools and parents.

The progress of school reform across the country would be much further along and much better understood if such conditions existed in every school. Unfortunately, they are rare. That is why it is frequently necessary to mobilize parents and others in communities from outside the system so they can be effective advocates of quality education for their children. Sometimes parents just have to demand change, forcefully and continuously. In order to do this, parents need:

- to understand their children's rights to a quality education and their rights to be involved;
- to know how to distinguish good and bad educational practices that will advance or hinder their rights;
- to have access to outside help in learning how to exercise their rights; and
- to have sustained support in the steps required to assure a quality education for their children.

Such mobilization need not be adversarial. At Ysleta Elementary School, in the Alliance network of schools throughout the Southwest and in several urban districts, for example, outside groups help parents organize to become equal partners with teachers and administrators. They are learning together how to improve both the teaching-learning and community environments.

Despite their importance, the groups that help parents organize to put pressure on recalcitrant systems are under-funded and spread too thin. Most of them also are not funded to do the advocacy and organizing necessary around systemic school reform issues. They need additional support, and they need to organize themselves into a national constituency, able to map strategies together, take successful practices on the road and expand

efforts to include other institutions in the reform effort such as churches and community-based groups.

Developing Policy and Accountability

This report endorses what school reform can do for student learning, especially among those groups of students which have been shamefully neglected in the past. Challenging content, appropriate assessments, an emphasis upon teacher quality, autonomy and responsibility to make decisions that support school-wide change directed at improving educational outcomes, parent involvement and adequate resources—all of these are essential components of reform.

Despite a consensus on the essentials among policymakers, researchers and many school leaders, the reforms just aren't taking hold in most schools and districts. *This is the case even when the reforms are required by law, as under Title I.* Furthermore, no public entity or group is adequately monitoring schools and districts to determine if they are carrying out their local Title I reforms, following their improvement plans submitted under Goals 2000 or are in compliance with the requirements of other laws. One would expect those responsible at the federal and state levels to want to be sure the reforms—and the monies spent on them—are accomplishing what was intended. However, there is almost no accountability in the school reform movement.

State accountability usually depends upon statewide tests, but a majority of states (33) still use norm-referenced tests. These do not align with content standards within a state and, therefore, are poor measures of student performance related to new content standards. Apparently, states are waiting until the last possible time (the year 2000 and an additional year if a state requests a waiver) to institute appropriate assessments as stipulated by Title I. In the meantime, most states do not have the means to measure the impact of standards-based reforms on students.

Development of new assessments obviously takes a long time. Meanwhile, many other aspects of reforms that would prepare students for high-stakes accountability, including school-based steps required by Title I, are not being evaluated. Parents and the public need to know, for example, if teachers are qualified for their assignments, or if textbooks reflect the standards expected of students, or if teachers have adequate opportunities to learn how to teach the standards.

The Del Mar conference was explicit about the design of a new accountability system and policies around that system. Among the elements it should include are:

- accountability for carrying out front-end steps that will ultimately determine back-end outcomes, such as implementing plans for changing curriculum, teaching practices, school structures and systems for helping individual students with difficulties, tied to a shared vision of high performance;
- varied and in-depth forms of student, school and system assessments;
- clearly defined and articulated purposes for assessment data;
- shared accountability for results among all those who are involved in student achievement;
- incentives and consequences for all concerned; and
- feedback that provides information on people's attitudes and satisfaction with school restructuring efforts.

"We believe that independent, community-based organizations are the best mechanism for creating broad-based citizen support for public education and for achieving fundamental reforms in the national's public schools. The community must both believe that all children can learn and support that learning."

Michelle Hynes, Public Education Network, Washington, D.C.

"How can we ensure that more strategies to build capacity in parents reach those beyond the reach of most programs?"

Luz Santana, The Right Question Project, Somerville, Massachusetts

Most critical is the *constant monitoring of progress on reform plans and requirements.* This would not be a panacea to cure the slow, often nonexistent, implementation of reforms, but it would be an important tool. If parents and communities have reliable information about the gap between what has been promised and what is actually happening, they would have greater reason to organize and to demand change. (See Appendix B for a table of parent involvement provisions in state law.)

A key test of the accountability system is how it answers a parent who says, "My child is not successfully learning the high-level skills and knowledge she is supposed to." Is the answer from the accountability system: "In five years, we'll have enough data to intervene if the school isn't showing an annual gain of 5 percent in the proportion of students that are proficient?" Or is the answer: "Your child has a right to quality teaching and a quality program that will help her learn those things, and we will figure out right now what to do to make it happen for her?"

Building Capacity

The massive changes in what is taught and how, in how schools are organized and in their relationships with families demand relearning and renewing—across the board. It is unrealistic, even foolish, to believe that school reforms can occur without them.

Schools and parents must learn to work together on creating a vision around higher student achievement. This requires collaborative skills, acquiring a new vocabulary and consensus building. For teachers and administrators, standards-based reforms demand greater content knowledge, skills at developing new types of assessments and proficiency at using data results to improve teaching and learning. It is not enough to go back to school and learn more content in history or math, for example. A teacher also needs to take the knowledge and shape it for classroom practices that foster problem solving rather than rote learning and that help students become active rather than passive learners. And all the while be able to articulate to parents the why and what of new classroom practices.

Parents need to have access to information and opportunities that will help them understand the changes and ask the right questions. They need to know when their children are not being taught high-level content, when the curriculum is not aligned with the high standards being measured or when students do not have the resources they need.

The Del Mar conference participants recommended several ways for teachers and parents to develop the skills needed to institute reforms:

- specific training for teachers and parents;
- opportunities to learn from others through visits, meetings and networking;
- continual access to good information and research; and
- greater opportunities to take leadership roles.

Higher education institutions have an important role in building capacities for reforms. Not only should they become standards-based in their preparation programs for teachers and administrators, but they also need to prepare teachers to work with parents, focus some of their research

efforts on parent and community involvement and create cross-disciplinary programs that help school and agency leaders collaborate around children's needs.

The Del Mar participants also suggested tools for building capacity for reforms, including:

- developing procedures and training for identifying, collecting and analyzing data that can be used to bring about change;
- identifying places where parent involvement is helping to implement reforms and disseminating information about these efforts through videos, print materials, presentations and a resource bank;
- developing networks—electronic, print and personal—of those working on parent/school partnerships for education reform;
- creating a "tool kit" that parents, schools and school systems can use together to gain "how-to" information on instituting and monitoring reforms;
- forming local task forces that serve as sounding boards for community and parent concerns about student progress; and
- developing and disseminating information for both parents and teachers about student and parent rights.

None of these recommendations for building parent support for school reforms and ensuring that the reforms take place mention "models." There aren't any. Every school's situation is unique. Except for the specific role of higher education, this report also does not delineate separate tasks for different groups—a set of recommendations for parents, another for educators, another for advocacy groups. Rather, it says that making school reforms universal—a reality for every child—is work that must be done together. The balance among strategies and the tools used will depend on each school's circumstances. However, every effort must mobilize parent and community support, hold itself accountable, and build everyone's capacity for fundamental change.

We all want every child to have a quality education.

We—and children across America—must not wait any longer for the will, the accountability and the skills needed to make that possible.

"How can we achieve greater levels of participation and diversity in parent advocacy initiatives with all voices being heard? The issue is to draw together parents of different racial and ethnic groups and of varying socio-economic classes and find a common, united voice for reclaiming schools for all children. Bringing together people is only the first step; ensuring that every voice is heard is another."

Maria Robledo-Montecel, Intercultural Development Research Association, San Antonio, Texas

Norwood Park Elementary School, Chicago, Illinois: *Tackling a High Mobility Rate*

Why Norwood Park?

The Local School Council at Norwood used data analysis to try to find out why its students were scoring so low on standardized tests. The study pinpointed an enormous problem with its mobility rate. Through conversations and surveys of parents and the community, the school found out what would keep parents in the school and instituted a number of changes—an all-day kindergarten, frequent and welcoming interactions between teachers and parents, and an expanded pre-school program. Teachers sought staff development to help them respond to parents' interests, such as more hands-on learning. As a result of the changes, the mobility rate dropped to eight percent, one of the lowest in the city.

At Norwood Park, a small K-8 school in an old residential area of Chicago, the job of improving student achievement was a moving target, to say the least. The school had a mobility rate of nearly 50 percent. This meant that half the 300 students each year were new — and half would leave by the next year. The average length of a student's stay was 10 months.

Three years ago, the Local School Council (LSC), parents and the principal decided that reducing mobility must be a high priority. Unless the school could work with students over the long term, student performance would never rise to high standards. When the council analyzed student scores, it found that the constant influx of new students made it necessary to repeat content rather than advance to higher levels. (Under the Chicago school reform law, all schools are governed by LSCs that are elected by the school community. A majority of LSC members must be parents.)

Although the school draws many students from the Norwood Park community, over half are bused in from diverse, inner-city neighborhoods all over the city. The school calls them its "extended community." An outside observer might expect that the high mobility was mainly confined to these students, but this is not the case. The advent of busing prompted many white families to withdraw their children, and nearby parochial and private schools draw off many others. The school composition is 23 percent African-American, 23 percent Hispanic, 5 percent Asian, and 49 percent white. Fifty-two percent are from low-income families.

What steps did the LSC take?

After talking with families and community members, the LSC decided to add a full-day kindergarten. The school's small size made it eligible only for a half-day program, but the LSC decided to use state Chapter 1 compensatory education funds to cover the extra cost. Enrollment soared. The school also expanded its two half-day pre-school programs for three-and four-year-olds. The high-quality early childhood program draws in young families and builds their commitment to the school. So does the fact that children can be there through middle school.

The LSC also identified low parent involvement as a key concern for the school community. Parents did not feel welcome in the school; they believed the teachers looked down on them. They also may not have felt that the school was committed to ensuring all children would learn to high standards. Now the school has an open-door policy and encourages many "small conversations," not just a few large, event-style encounters. Parents and community members began volunteering and offered to run workshops for other parents, teach logic and great books, inventory class libraries and mentor math clubs.

The LSC also was concerned about the math program. According to Elliott Marks, the former LSC chair and parent of a sixth grader, parents were concerned that student math scores lagged behind reading. The LSC adopted the goal that students graduating from Norwood Park should be eligible for hon-

ors math in high school. As a result, teachers took part in intensive math training, and the program was substantially improved.

In three years, the mobility rate has dropped to 8 percent. Student achievement has steadily advanced. Between 1993 and 1997, math scores climbed from 30 percent to 57 percent scoring at grade level, and reading from 32 percent to 52 percent, on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. These scores are higher than they were in 1990 when only 9 percent of the students were from low-income families. Every eighth-grader exceeds the state standard for writing even though only two have attended the school since first grade.

"As the LSC chair, I reached out constantly to other parents, actively seeking their opinions. I published my home phone number in the school newsletter. I always said, 'Never feel you don't have something to contribute.'"

Elliott Marks, parent

How did lowering mobility contribute to raising standards?

"When we work with young students year after year," says Principal William Meuer, "we can design programs that respond to their needs and assure that they make steady progress." So long as students stay in a solid program, they can move along and catch up at the same time.

Students who have attended both the pre-school program and full-day kindergarten have a firm basis for success in first grade. Meuer continues, "we can identify specific areas of concern for the young learner early on and seek the necessary support to take care of a problem. Parents are encouraged to become active partners in their child's education." Parents talk to teachers and administrators when they think their children are bored or capable of doing higher level work. As a result, Meuer says, "we are continually re-tooling our program, while sticking to our child-centered, hands-on vision for learning."

How do other schools in the system learn from a Norwood Park?

The Chicago Teacher's Union Quest Center selected Norwood Park as one of 11 schools to take part in a staff development experiment in improving instruction. Rather than a demonstration program, where observers come to see a finished product, Norwood Park decided to be a lab school where visitors can observe teachers working on new techniques. "We wanted to invite other schools to see what we were trying," first-grade teacher Shari Frost says. "We want to give them an idea of what it looks like starting out." Norwood Park tried a variety of instructional goals, including literature-based reading, hands-on math and science and an emphasis on writing across the whole curriculum. It was the most visited school of any in the group.

The Chicago school district also has an exemplary school program to showcase effective practices. In 1996, Norwood Park became a "professional development site" for language arts grades 5-8. In 1997, Norwood Park School received an Annenberg Challenge grant, along with two other schools and the Quest Center, to network and combine forces for staff development. "We hope these schools, working together, can implement model programs and best practices," Meuer says. "These are important opportunities for principals to develop stronger leadership skills and management techniques."

Appendix A

Helpful Research and Materials

This brief review covers 30 books, reports, articles, and other materials that illuminate this complex subject. They are organized into four categories: Relevant Reports and Background Information on School Reform, Important Research on School Reform, Research and Information on Parent Involvement, and Useful Tools to Involve Families in Improving Schools.

I. Relevant Reports and Background Information on School Reform

The Education Trust, ***Education Watch: The 1996 State and National Data Book and The Community Data Guide*****, Washington, DC, 1996.** The data book is a succinct summary of student achievement, in the United States and in each state. The data make a powerful case that a good education matters, and that far too few students, especially African-American and Hispanic students, have the opportunities to learn what they need to know. National test data show a widening gap between white and minority students. A variety of other data document that school systems serving a high proportion of low-income and minority students have fewer resources, less well-prepared teachers and far less challenging curricula. Still other studies show that these students do well when offered a better education and higher level classes.

The data guide presents charts, and helpful tips that community advocates and leaders can use to gather the same kind of data on their local school system.

Education Week, ***Quality Counts: A Report Card on the Condition of Public Education in the 50 States*****, Washington, DC, January 1997.** This thorough report, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, presents information in narrative and chart form, on standards and assessments, quality of teaching, school climate, allocation of resources, and student achievement. Each state receives a grade in each area. On the average, the performance is mediocre. In most areas, the states' average grade is a C. This finding sums it up well: "Maine has the best score in the nation on the 1994 NAEP 4th grade reading test, and 59% of its 4th graders could not read at a proficient level."

Herman, Rebecca and Sam Stringfield, ***Ten Promising Programs for Educating ALL Children: Evidence of Impact*****, Educational Research Service, Arlington VA, 1997.** This report presents information and data on ten programs. Short articles and tables cover a description of the program, a summary of evidence on the program's effectiveness in improving student achievement, limited descriptions of implementation and other issues, summaries of research reviews, and summary of on-site observations. The programs are grouped by type:

> ***External Whole School Programs:*** School Development Program (Comer Model), Success for All, Paideia Program, Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer)
> ***Local Whole School Programs:*** Schoolwide Title I projects, extended year schoolwide projects
> ***Externally Developed Targeted Programs:*** Reading Recovery and Computer Assisted Instruction
> ***Locally Developed Targeted Programs:*** extended time projects and tutoring programs

Parent involvement is strongest in the Comer model and in Title I schoolwide programs, and is emphasized somewhat in Coalition of Essential Schools and Success for All.

Marzano, Robert J. And John S. Kendall, ***A Comprehensive Guide to Designing Standards-Based Districts, Schools, and Classrooms*****, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA, 1996.** This basic guide answers essential questions about standards-based reform. It includes guidelines for organizing curriculum and instruction around standards, examples of assignments and scoring guides for assessing students, suggestions for tracking stu-

dent progress and advice about reporting on student achievement.

Mathews, David, *Is There a Public for Public Schools?*, Kettering Foundation Press, Dayton, OH, 1996. This short, punchy report draws on extensive polling data and recent research to present a picture of the troubled relationship between communities, the larger public, and public schools. Mathews also presents practical advice for rebuilding public life, with some evidence that improved schools will result.

Oakes, Jeannie, Amy Stuart Wells and Associates, *Beyond the Technicalities of School Reform: Policy Lessons from Detracking Schools*, UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, Los Angeles, 1996. This monograph continues the important work of these researchers into the effects of grouping students into rigid, hierarchical tracks. This practice conflicts with the movement toward high academic standards for all students, yet is pervasive in American schools. Divided into two parts, the report first examines 10 schools that have "detracked." Their strategy was to provide low-track students (mostly poor and minority) greater access and opportunities to learn a high-quality curriculum, while maintaining the quality of instruction for high-track (mostly white middle-class) students. At each school, the lowest level track was eliminated.

The second section focuses on the cultural and political dimensions of the process. The strongest opponents of detracking, predictably, were parents whose children benefit from the current system. Using the threat of white flight, they fought to protect their children's privileged status, while the mostly minority parents of low-track students remained quiet. The opposition was most intense where the upper-level classes were not perceived as adequate.

Poplin, Mary and Joseph Weers, *Voices from the Inside: A Report on Schooling from Inside the Classroom*, Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, CA 1993. The researchers spent 18 months interviewing members of four school communities about the problems of schooling. They found that what the experts list as problems (e.g. high dropout rates, low achievement) are quite different from what students, teachers, custodians, parents, support staff, cafeteria workers, school nurses and administrators see. In short, they see the crisis inside schools as one of poor human relationships and failed understanding, especially between teachers and students.

Public Agenda Foundation, *Divided Within, Besieged Without: The Politics of Education in Four American School Districts* (1993) and *First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools* (1994), New York, N.Y. In order to "shed light on the inner workings of education reform," the Public Agenda Foundation conducted 200 lengthy interviews with educators and parents/citizens involved in the schools in four diverse school districts. ***Divided Within*** results were disillusioning. Good-faith efforts at reform eventually bogged down in turf wars. The reforms lose their luster "as traditional, narrowly partisan modes of interaction within districts reassert themselves. Positions harden and distrust sets in." The authors recommend "candid and continuing conversations among educators at all levels, among educators and parents, and among the schools and the business community.

Other barriers to school reform were revealed in the more than 1,100 interviews conducted for ***First Things First.*** The public is most concerned abut safety, order and learning basic skills. A majority are uncomfortable with changes that make typical classrooms too different from what they remembered in their own education. Yet the public does want change. "Despite their strong support for more order and discipline in the schools, and their commitment to more traditional teaching methods, the public overwhelmingly rejects the notion that schools should be domains of boredom or fear. People believe that learning can be fun and interesting, and want schools to find ways to help children enjoy their education and become more confident and self-assured."

II. Important Research on School Reform

Elmore, Richard E., "Getting to Scale with Good Educational Practice," *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 77, No. 1., 1996. This article addresses the question of how good educational practice can move beyond "pockets of excellence" to reach a greater proportion of schools and classrooms. Elmore reviews the history of two attempts at large-scale reform from the past, the progressive movement and National Science Foundation curriculum reform projects, to analyze why their effects were transient. Then he applies these lessons to the current standards-based education reform movement.

Briefly, his argument says that reforms rarely affect the core of educational practice, what happens in the classroom between teachers and students. While schools are constantly changing, the way teachers teach remains the same. "The problem,

then, lies not in the supply of new ideas, but in the demand for them." Elmore concludes with recommendations, including an incentive system.

Lein, Laura, Joseph F. Johnson, Jr., and Mary Ragland, "Successful Texas Schoolwide Programs: Research Study Results," Charles A. Dana Center, University of Texas at Austin, 2901 North IH-35, ECN 2.200, Austin, TX, February 1997. This study looks at 26 schools in Texas that had a high percent of low-income students (over 60% qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch), were implementing Title I schoolwide programs, and showed high academic performance (at least 70% passed the math section of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills or TAAS. The schools were urban and rural, from large and small districts and served diverse populations. The researchers found seven characteristics these schools share:

1. ***Focus on the academic success of every student.*** Well articulated throughout all aspects of the school
2. ***No excuses.*** Especially no blaming the students or their families for poor results.
3. ***Experimentation.*** Widely used, but carefully done and constantly modified.
4. ***Inclusivity: everyone is part of the solution.*** Wide variety of partners (e.g. bus drivers, school nurses and counselors, parents, cafeteria workers, community leaders, students) all pitch in. Special efforts to make parents feel welcome.
5. ***Sense of family.*** Concern, dedication, involvement, respect and love for students, parents and others in school community. No "us" versus "them."
6. ***Collaboration and trust.*** Educators working together in an atmosphere that allows disagreement and provides comfort when revealing weakness or failure.
7. ***Passion for learning and growing.*** Continued pushing for improvement, even after high results attained.

Newmann, Fred M. and Associates, *Authentic Achievement: Restructuring Schools for Intellectual Quality*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1996. This book covers a study of 24 schools that had substantially restructured and improved student achievement as a result. Each one had implemented a number of changes:

- Personalized programs so that teachers and students developed strong and trusting relationships.
- Organized teachers into interdisciplinary or grade-level teams and extended instructional time.
- Nearly eliminated tracking, ability grouping and remedial classes.
- Articulated common standards for student learning and exploring new forms of assessment.
- Gained increased autonomy from districts and states to exert more control over curriculum, staffing and budgeting, and set up shared decision-making mechanisms among staff, administrators and occasionally parents.
- Involved students in community-based learning.

Seven of the schools had high parent involvement, where parents took part in decision-making, developing curriculum and providing technical support for the school. In most there was significant consensus, but in two there was high conflict.

Newmann, Fred M. and Gary Wehlage, *Successful School Restructuring: A Report to the Public and Educators*, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Madison, WI, 1995. This study analyzed data from more than 1,500 elementary, middle and high schools throughout the United States, and from field research in 44 schools. The researchers found that school restructuring can improve student learning if it is focused on four key factors:

- **Student learning** — Teachers agree on a vision of high quality work and communicate clear goals for high quality learning to students and parents.
- **Authentic pedagogy** — Teachers bring the vision to life through teaching that challenges students to think, develop in-depth understanding and apply academic learning to important, real-world problems. "Regardless of social background, an average student would increase from about the 30th percentile to about the 60th percentile as a result of experiencing high versus low authentic pedagogy." (p. 25)
- **School organizational capacity** — Schools function as "professional communities." Teachers collaborate and take collective responsibility for student learning, through shared governance, teaching teams, staff development, small school size and parent involvement in a broad range of school affairs.
- **External support** — Schools receive financial, technical and political support through standards of high intellectual quality, sustained staff development and increased autonomy.

III. Research and Information on Parent Involvement

Burch, Patricia and Ameetha Palanki with Don Davies, *From Clients to Partners: Four Case Studies of Collaboration and Family Involvement in the Development of School-linked Services* [Report No. 29]. Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning, Baltimore, MD, 1995. This report looks at the effective policies and practices of four local projects that are developing collaboration among education, health and other service providers and are empowering families as equal partners in their efforts. The researchers conducted two-year case studies of these projects: the RAIN project in Miami Beach, Florida; comprehensive services in Las Cruces, New Mexico; School-Based Youth Services in New Brunswick, New Jersey; and the Parent Facilitation Project in Snohomish County, Washington.

The report identifies six components of these comprehensive initiatives that policymakers should address in any effort to create and facilitate effective collaborative projects:

1) involve families as agenda setters and partners in collaboration;
2) create a management structure with representatives of agencies and beneficiaries;
3) ease access to multiple sources of funding;
4) establish inter-agency and cross-role networks;
5) provide training and other support for families; and
6) establish and fund collaborative evaluation mechanisms.

Specific challenges and recommendations for meeting the challenges are offered for each of the components for effective collaborations.

California Tomorrow, *The Schools We Need Now: How Parents, Families and Communities Can Change Schools*, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, CA, 1997. This handbook explains the key issues in school reform using clear language aimed at parents and citizens. Its premise is that children of all races and backgrounds have aspirations far above the opportunities they are offered in schools, and that schools must reform so all students receive a high quality education. Checklists on school and classroom practices provide guidance for parents; profiles of schools in progress illustrate how reforms are carried out; and data charts make a strong case for addressing inequities. The report is available in Spanish and English for $12. Call (415) 441-7631.

Davies, Don, *Partnerships for Student Success*, Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning, Baltimore, Md, 1996. Research and experience show that partnerships between schools, families and communities are powerful tools to achieve better schools; however, they are not a substitute for good schools or effective teaching.

Ten recommendations for schools are presented on how to develop a culture of collaboration to support family-community-school partnerships:

1) adopt and back up written policies for partnerships;
2) align personnel policies with district's commitment to partnership;
3) prepare school staff and families to collaborate;
4) involve family members as full partners with real decision-making responsibility;
5) develop agreements with social service and health agencies to provide services to students and their families;
6) use multiple approaches to communication;
7) increase opportunities for students to learn at home and in the community;
8) set up family/parent centers in every elementary, middle, and high school;
9) expand parent choice within the public school system; and
10) create planning and problem-solving teams.

The recommendations include examples of schools and districts that are actually taking these steps towards effective partnerships. The report concludes that leadership by school board members, superintendents, central office staff and principals is the key to the successful implementation of these recommendations and the resulting cultural change.

Epstein, Joyce L., *School and Family Partnerships*, [Report No. 6] Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning, Baltimore, Md, 1992. This report examines the progress made over the last decade in the involvement of parents in schools. The relationships between schools and families have begun to be viewed more as partnerships than as families and schools serving separate goals. This shift has allowed researchers to examine schools, families and communities as overlapping spheres of influence on student development.

The report explains Epstein's six-part typology of school-family-community involvement and her theoretical structure for research and development of effective partnerships. It also summarizes the results of many

research studies examining how family environments influence family involvement in schools, how school environments influence family involvement, and the effects of school-family partnerships on parents, students, and teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools.

Looking ahead, the report points to the need for education and training of teachers and administrators in working with families as partners, improved policies and leadership at all levels to support partnerships and new ways of thinking about the shared responsibilities for children.

Resource: National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools. Joyce Epstein directs this network and invites schools, school districts, and state departments of education to join. Members obtain assistance in implementing positive and permanent programs of school-family-community partnerships.

There are no membership fees, but states, districts, and schools must agree to a few requirements for adequate staff, budgets, support for good work, and communication with the Network. The Center provides members with a handbook, certificate, optional annual training workshops, newsletters, assistance via phone, e-mail, and website and research and evaluation activities. For more information, write to Joyce Epstein, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University/CRESPAR, 3505 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218.

The Edward W. Hazen Foundation, "Investing in our Children: Advocacy and Organizing for School Reform," a Report from the Conference of Grantees, New York City, October 1995. The proceedings of this meeting of grantee organizations which work with low-income parents at the grassroots level to engage parents and communities in school reform, identified several critical issues:

- Inequities in funding and resources are vast and growing.
- Local school systems react to problems such as crime, rather than take proactive approaches that strengthen families and schools.
- The people in charge of school systems do not believe that all children can learn. As a result, tracking and testing practices segregate students and deny opportunity.
- Schools are not equipped to reach and teach children and families from diverse ethnic, racial, and social backgrounds.

The organizations identified a variety of resources and assistance that would deepen and sustain their work, including training in organizing, strategies to foster collaboration, opportunities to share best practices, tools to measure progress and evaluate their work, and sustained support.

Henderson, Anne T. and Nancy Berla, *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*, Center for Law and Education, Washington, DC, 1994. This annotated bibliography summarizes 66 studies that document the positive effects of family involvement in education on student achievement, and on schools. A short introduction reviews the studies, major findings, and trends in the research.

"Taken together, the studies summarized in this report strongly suggest that when schools support families to develop these three conditions, children from low-income families and diverse cultural backgrounds approach the grades and test scores expected for middle class children. They also are more likely to take advantage of a full range of educational opportunities after graduating from high school. Even with only one or two of these conditions in place, children do measurably better at school."

Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen, and Howard M. Sandler, "Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children's Education?" *Review of Educational Research*, Spring 1997, Vol. 67, No. 1, pp. 3-42. This study examines psychological theory to explore why parents become involved. Three factors appear to be key, in this order of importance:

1. Parents' perception of their proper role in education, i.e. are they supposed to be actively involved, or leave education to the school?
2. Parents sense of their own efficacy, i.e. do they feel their involvement will be useful?
3. The invitations, demands and opportunities for involvement, i.e. do parents feel the school and their children want them to be involved?

"Absent specific attention to these parental components of involvement, the best and most well-financed school efforts to invite involvement are likely to fall frustratingly short of success." (p.36)

Policy Studies Associates, *Overcoming Barriers to Family Involvement in Title I Schools,*

prepared for the Office Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract EA94053001, Washington DC, February, 1997. Using data from federal surveys of 810 elementary and middle schools and 20,800 children and their parents, as well as parent focus group interviews and a survey of state education agencies, the study identifies major barriers to involving families and successful approaches to promoting family involvement. This research pertains to Title I schools, which by law serve above average numbers of low-income children.

RMC Research Corporation, *Parent and Community Involvement in Education, U.S. Department of Education*, Contract RP 91-172008, Washington, DC, 1997. This study emphasizes parent, family, and community involvement in the middle grades. Researchers conducted case studies of nine sites. Across sites, eight major themes emerged.

1. five common characteristics of school districts and schools undergoing reform: all stakeholders participate in the reform process, a strong and shared vision guides the process, strong policies support the effort, the school is viewed as part of a community, and school reform is an arena of political struggle;
2. the middle grades are a critical transition for children and families;
3. this challenge creates opportunities for family involvement;
4. strong personal relationships form the core of family and community involvement;
5. parents, educators and students share responsibility for decision-making;
6. sustained involvement depends on active advocacy by school, district and community leaders;
7. active partnerships require support systems, such as professional development, human resources, and decision-making processes;
8. parents and family members need to understand the curriculum, and this often depends on teachers; and
9. strong partnerships have close connections to the community.

Shepherd, Lorrie A. and Carribeth L. Bliem, "Parents' Thinking About Standardized Tests and Performance Assessments," *Educational Researcher*, November, 1995, pp. 25-32. This study was conducted in a small district in Colorado that had experienced a backlash against performance-based assessments. The "back-to-basics" platform of newly elected school board members raised concerns that reforms placed too much emphasis on self-esteem and too little on basic skills and that new assessments would not prepare students for the SAT and lacked validity. Using questionnaires and interviews, the researchers asked parents how they evaluate the usefulness of tests compared to other information such as report cards and conversations with teachers. Overwhelmingly, 77 percent of parents said they learn the most from talking with the teacher. Only 14 percent said they found standardized test scores "very useful."

Next, the researchers showed third-grade parents multiple-choice test questions used on standardized tests and a sample of open-ended performance assessment questions. Although most parents approved of both types, more favored the open-ended questions (44% compared to 31% for math questions; 58% compared to 21% in reading).

According to parents, seeing graded samples of student work indicates school quality, because it shows them what is being taught and what expectations are set by the classroom teacher. The researchers attribute the favorable response to two factors:

1. The changes proposed were not radical. The use of performance assessments did not imply throwing out standardized tests.

2. Parents were able to look closely at performance assessment problems before it had been negatively characterized. Most were intrigued and satisfied that the material was challenging and worth learning.

U.S. Department of Education, *Strong Families, Strong Schools*, Washington, DC, 1994.

This review of research makes the case for business, government, and community support for greater parent involvement in education.

IV. Useful Tools

Bamber, Christina, Nancy Berla, and Anne Henderson, *Learning From Others: Good Programs and Successful Campaigns*, Center for Law and Education, Washington, DC, 1996. This notebook describes about 70 programs that successfully engage families in improving student outcomes. The book is organized by age range (preschool through high school), and by type of program (programs based mainly in or around schools, and community-wide campaigns to improve conditions for raising and educating children). Many are local examples of national programs such as Accelerated Schools, Right Question Project, Success for All, HIPPY, Parents as Teachers, and Coalition of Essential Schools.

The book begins with introductory chapters that describe how these programs operate, the strategies for engaging families, and the outcomes they encourage; pathways to partnership, factors that seem key to their success; and areas that are underdeveloped or missing.

Davies, Don, Tony Wagner, Nancy Sconyers, and Associates, *Policy Portfolio*, Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning, Baltimore, MD, 1996. The policy portfolio includes six items to help guide schools, districts, community organizations, and families to understand the importance and challenges of collaboration for student success. Drawing from five years of studies conducted by researchers at the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, this Policy Portfolio explains many important steps for creating good partnerships. The components of the portfolio are:

1) "Partnerships for Student Success: What We Have Learned about Policies to Increase Student Achievement Through School Partnerships with Families and Communities;"
2) "Seeing the School Reform Elephant: Connecting Policy Makers, Parents, Practitioners, and Students;"
3) "What Parents Want (summarizing parents opinions about public schools);"
4) "Partners in Action: A Resource Guide;"
5) "Annotated Bibliography: Research from the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning;" and
6) "A Tale of Two Partnerships," a videotape that chronicles the experiences of a high school and an elementary school in Boston that are developing partnerships with families and community agencies.

George Lucas Educational Foundation, *Learn and Live*, Nicasio, California, 1997. This book and documentary film are designed "to serve as catalysts for conversation in communities around the nation." In town meetings or family living rooms, they can be a starting point for talking about public schools, what their goals should be and how they can be better. The book is divided into four major sections: students, teachers, communities, and schools. Each chapter begins with a short article, then gives examples of good practices in schools, lists key organizations, periodicals and readings and ends with a list of people to contact. The film, hosted by Robin Williams, shows schools around the country that are integrating technology with teaching, and involving parents, businesses, and the community. Order from the Foundation: P.O. Box 672, Santa Rosa, CA 95402.

Henderson, Anne and the staff of the Center for Law and Education, *Parents Are Powerful*, Center for Law and Education, Washington, DC, 1997. Also available in Spanish, as *Los Padres Tienen Poder*. This full-color, 32-page booklet in an easy-to-read magazine format is packed with essential information on guiding children through school. It advises parents on how to be effective advocates from preschool through high school. For each age group, it helps parents know:

- what to look for in good schools;
- questions to ask at school and to ask children about school; and
- how to deal with problems that come up at school.

Special sections on federal programs and high standards advise parents how to use their rights to make sure their children get a high quality education and the services they may need.

Johnson, Ruth, *Setting Our Sights: Measuring Equity in School Change*, The Achievement Council, Los Angeles, CA, 1996 This book explains how to use data, especially student achievement and outcome data, as a lever for school change. Not only does it advise on how to collect and analyze data, it contains tools for collecting data (including survey forms) and explains how to present data so people can understand it. Then it gives advice on how to plan for improvement using the data and to monitor progress.

Johnson, Vivian R., *Family Center Starter Kit*, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, 1997. This kit contains four components to assist schools in developing home-school collaboration, including a 20-minute video that shows Family Centers in action.

Two reports included in the kit describe family centers as special places in or near schools where parents and other family members connect with school staff and community participants to plan and implement programs that support families, educators, and communities. The first reports on a survey of 28 schools in 14 states. The second describes four of the 28 schools as cases that illustrate the eight dimensions of these special places. The kit also contains the "Family Center Guidebook," a ready resource with suggestions, quotes and examples in a user-friendly format. Order from Publications Department, 3505 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218, (410) 516-8808, $35.

Palanki, Ameetha and Patricia Burch, with Don Davies, *In Our Hands: a Multi-site Parent-Teacher Action Research Project* [Report No. 30], Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning, Baltimore, MD, 1995. Through the process of parent-teacher action research, teams of parents, teachers, principals and facilitators in eight elementary and middle schools in seven cities have closely examined their efforts to involve families and the community and have taken action to improve partnerships in their schools. Action research teams allow the people most affected by school decisions to have a voice in those decisions.

This report includes case studies describing each school's participation in the Parent-Teacher Action Research (PTAR) project conducted by the Institute for Responsive Education and the Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children s Learning at Boston University. The school reports include the results of their efforts to improve school climate, parent involvement in school, parent/teacher/staff attitudes, program development and changes in policy and practice. Sources of data came from family members, children and youth, school and program staff, or district and state policy makers.

The report concludes that by using parent-teacher action research, these eight schools developed constructive two-way communication processes; increased participation of teachers and parents in educational planning and assessment for individual students; and increased participation of teachers and parents in schoolwide educational decision making, curriculum development, and assessment.

Appendix B

Parent Involvement Provisions In State Education Laws

This table contains a survey of state statutes providing for parent involvement in education. The table includes only statewide statutes and does not account for administrative policies or local arrangements. It is a comprehensive, though not exhaustive, review of generally applicable statutes covering public K-12 schools. It does not cover special statutory provisions for charter schools, pre-schools, child care programs, higher education, limited English proficiency or special needs students.

Alabama

Alabama has several parent oriented initiatives directed at both the state and local level. The state has established the Council on Family and Children to coordinate existing parent involvement services, passed a resolution encouraging employers to give leave for parents to participate in school activities, and made compensatory funds available for parent literacy projects. Local school boards must consult parents when developing community projects for parent training and must inform parents of their education-related responsibilities to their children. Districts must publish accountability reports and those schools required by the accountability law to undertake a self-study must consult with parents in that study. (Code of Alabama §§ 16-28-2.2, 16-6b)

Alaska

Alaska requires schools to provide a forum for parents' opinions and has created a standardized form for gathering input from parents. Each school must sponsor a public meeting to discuss student and school performance and create a performance report for the district superintendent. The superintendent in consultation with parents must prepare a public district report card and must forward his reports to the state education agency. The legislature has provided a standard Parent Involvement Questionnaire and has required that districts distribute it to all parents and report the results in the district report card. (Alaska Statutes §§ 14.03.120 et seq.)

Arizona

Arizona requires school districts to plan for parent involvement. Plans must encourage parent-teacher relationships, allow parents to review the curriculum and materials, and permit the withdrawal of children from objectionable activities. (Arizona Revised Statutes, Title 15, § 102)

Arkansas

Arkansas' efforts to involve parents in education have a three-part focus: encouraging schools to reach out to parents, training parents as teachers, and engaging parents and students in the eighth grade to set their sights on post-secondary goals. Schools must have plans for parent involvement that address parent-school communication, volunteering, participation in school decisions, collaboration with the community, and learning activities that support classroom instruction. The state

education agency must develop a voluntary program to train parents as teachers. This program must include television courses and materials for parents, instruction sessions by teachers skilled at working with parents, training for parent instructors, and resource materials. The state must provide special support for training parents to train other parents and will sponsor a public information campaign stressing the role of parents in scholastic achievement. Districts must provide matching funds to participate. The state education agency must also involve parents in developing the state guidelines for school district discipline policies.

Arkansas is investing in eighth grade students. Eighth-graders must meet with their parents and the school counselors to define the students' educational objectives and to develop a course of study for grades nine through twelve. The state education agency is developing information packages for eighth grade students and their parents concerning academic requirements, fiscal preparation, financial assistance, and available instate options for post-secondary advancement. (Arkansas Code of 1987 Annotated §§ 6-5-403, 6-5-403, 6-18-502, 6-10-109)

California

California's parent involvement efforts have been directed primarily at the state level. The state superintendent must recommend effective methods for parents, schools, and districts to improve parent involvement; in particular, the superintendent must distribute a model student-school-parent compact. A state board must establish prospective standards for teacher credentialing that emphasize parent involvement. California encourages parent involvement by requiring employers with more than 25 employees at a site to give up to 40 hours annual leave for employees to participate in school activities. The state protects family privacy by requiring parental consent before gathering information on certain topics. Local school districts receiving state or federal compensatory education funds must have parent involvement programs. Finally, parents may withdraw their children from statewide assessments. (California Labor Code, § 230.8; California Education Code, §§ 11500 et seq., 60614 et seq.)

Colorado

Colorado addresses parent involvement at all levels. The state department of education must set the standard by articulating achievable goals for involving parents in improving public schools. Special state-sponsored programs incorporate parent involvement requirements: district preschool programs must have a written policy of parent responsibility corresponding to state guidelines and proposals to operate pilot schools for expelled students must include a plan for parent participation. Each district must include parents in developing a system of evaluating all certified personnel. Districts are encouraged to develop a comprehensive health education program that incorporates input from parents. The state legislature has also passed a resolution encouraging parents to be involved in their children's education and urging businesses to allow parents leave time to participate in school activities. (Colorado Revised Statutes §§ 22-9-107, 22-25-106, 22-28-107, 22-38-105, 22-53-206)

Connecticut

Connecticut has structured its parent involvement effort from the top down. The state education agency must develop model programs for local districts. It must develop model parent-student agreements as well as local and regional panels with parent representatives to foster the use of the model agreements. It must provide districts with written materials concerning school curricula and activities for parents and students. The state education agency must appoint a statewide volunteer coordinator, develop and submit a plan to the legislature to encourage volunteers, and pro-

vide information and technical assistance to districts on involving volunteers in school activities. The state also helps districts develop their own initiatives. The state education agency must create a program encouraging districts to develop strategies for parents' active assistance in the educational process (e.g., providing parents with opportunities to meet teachers and review the curriculum of their child's program). In addition, state grants are available to districts for parent involvement projects. (General Statutes of Connecticut, §§ 10-4g, 10-220a, 10-264f, 10-266q)

Delaware

Delaware has noted the importance of parents in education and begun to require their involvement in reforming schools. The state legislature made a finding that parents are the first and most influential educators of their children, that the home environment has a major impact on academic success, and that dropouts often come from home with well intentioned but untrained parents. School improvement plans must include provisions for parental involvement. (Delaware Code Annotated Title 14, §§ 806, 4118)

District of Columbia

The District of Colombia divides responsibility for parent involvement between the superintendent, the mayor, and a committee including community representatives. The superintendent must submit to the mayor, city council, and appropriate congressional committees a long-term reform plan that includes a plan to encourage parent involvement in all school activities, particularly parent teacher conferences. The Mayor is authorized to develop and implement a policy encouraging all residents with children attending public school to participate in at least one parent-teacher conference every 90 days during the academic year. The Consensus Commission, on which community members sit, is responsible for planning long-term reforms and making recommendations to improve community, parent, and business involvement in the public and public charter schools. (District of Columbia Code Annotated §§ 31-2853.1, 31-2853.82 et seq., 31-2853.91)

Florida

Florida has identified parent involvement as an essential component of several statewide education objectives. Involving parents in achieving school improvement and education accountability is a central element of the state's goals for education. The state education agency must adopt standards to measure progress toward this goal. Schools may only offer character development programs if they include parent involvement where appropriate. Parents are also involved in Florida's Education Success Incentive Program to encourage students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds to maintain satisfactory academic progress and enroll in post-secondary institutions. District project proposals must include procedures to maximize parent involvement in the program and plans for parent-school compacts. The board which reviews the proposals must include parents. (Florida Statutes Chapters 228.02, 229.591, 229.0615)

Georgia

Georgia requires that parents participate in overseeing reform initiatives that would function outside some state restrictions. Parent must be members of interdisciplinary committees that plan pilot programs using decategorized state funds to better serve at-risk students. The state must also include parents on the review panel evaluating school and district proposals for such programs. (Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-2-250)

Hawaii

Hawaii seeks to incorporate parents into every facet of their children's educations. The legislature, in the context of a drug prevention and counseling statute, expressed its intention that parents be involved in all aspects of a child's education. This principle is put into action by the requirement that school principals solicit the advice of parents on the use of funds and making position assignments. (Hawaii Revised Statutes §§ 33-201, 302A-1308)

Idaho

The Idaho Constitution has been interpreted to establish a right for parents to participate in the supervision and control of their child's education. However, statutory provisions for parent involvement are limited to the requirement that parents be involved in the development and evaluation of any new sex education program. (Idaho Constitution Art. IX, § 1; Idaho Official Code § 33-160)

Illinois

Illinois has comprehensive parental involvement provisions addressing both the state and local roles in education. The state includes parents in decision-making and uses parent involvement in schools as a prerequisite for special treatment. Parents inform state decisions as mandatory members on all appointed advisory boards that address issues affecting parents or students. Parents also have the opportunity to testify concerning requests to the state board for waivers of administrative rules. Illinois uses parent involvement as a criterion for some supplementary funding programs and special designations. It is a required area of study for administrative certification. The state supplemental funding statute names supporting parent involvement as one of its objectives.

Local districts use parent involvement as an indicator of school quality. Districts must publish parent-involvement rates on annual school performance report cards. Reorganization committees must develop methods to encourage parent involvement in all grades. Districts may request technical assistance on involving parents from the state. Schools operating bilingual education programs are encouraged to provide interpreters at public meetings to boost LEP parent involvement. Also, parents have a statutory right to withdraw their child from health education by filling a written objection based on constitutional grounds. (105 Illinois Complied Statutes §§ 5/2-3.106, 5/2-3.25g-h, 5/2-3.7a, 5/10-17a, 5/10-17a-c, 5/21-7.1, 5/27-11, 5/34-2.2, 5/34-8.11, 40/10, 5/70-20.14)

Indiana

Indiana includes parent involvement as an element of school reform and protects family privacy. Mandatory school improvement plans must include efforts to increase parental involvement in education. Schools must allow parents to examine materials used for personal analysis, evaluations, or surveys of certain student beliefs or practices. Students may only be required to provide such information if they are legally independent and give prior consent or a parent provides prior written consent. (Indiana Code §§ 20-3.1-9-3, 20-10.1-4-15)

Iowa

Iowa recognizes parent involvement as an element of school reform and seeks to involve parents in all child services. The Iowa legislature declared its intention that school reform be a cooperative effort between parents and schools at the local level. It also directed the state to develop activities for increasing parental involvement through improved communications, volunteering opportunities, advisory committees, and parent surveys. Program proposals to provide coordinated services

at centers located near schools must include plans for parental involvement. Support services providing parenting training must be made available to parents and students and homeless families must be provided with information identifying their rights and responsibilities in the education of their children. (Code of Iowa §§ 66.4(5), 61.5(3), 33 et seq.)

Kansas

Kansas encourages family involvement by giving parents an explicit right to control their child's education and requiring districts to create advisory boards that include parents. State law declares that parents retain a fundamental right to "exercise primary control over the care and upbringing of their children in their charge" and provides a cause of action to enforce the right. The state also orders schools to pursue parent involvement. Each district must establish a school site council including parent representatives. These councils are responsible for evaluating state, district, and school performance goals and the methods planned for achieving them.

The state education agency will then evaluate the contribution of the site councils to facilitating educational reform. (Kansas Statutes Annotates §§ 38-141, 72-6439(c)(1).)

Kentucky

Kentucky requires that parents have a voice in every level of the education system. Parents must be represented on a statewide education reform task force appointed by the governor, comprise at least three members of the state textbook commission, and participate in the screening committees for selecting a superintendent. Each district must implement school-based decision making by forming school councils at each school that include parents as members. Districts may also appoint a board that includes parents to develop a code of student rights and responsibilities for secondary schools. Every school classroom must have a telephone to facilitate parent-teacher communication as a part of the five-year school technology plan. Also, family involvement must be incorporated into new programs. All state funded preschool programs for at-risk children must have provisions for parent involvement. Grants are available for instructing at-risk preschool parents and their children. Programs must include basic academic training for parents as well as structured activities for parents and children or equivalent. In addition, the ungraded primary education program developed by the state must include provisions for positive parent involvement. (Kentucky Revised Statutes Annotated §§ 156.160, 156.405, 156.670, 157.3175, 158.360, 160.295, 160.345, 160.352, 160.730)

Louisiana

Louisiana organizes policy and gathers information about parent involvement at the state level. The state superintendent must sponsor public, quarterly meetings to coordinate policies for promoting parent involvement. The state education agency must submit to the governor and the education committees of the legislature an annual report on the status of state and local efforts. In addition it must establish a clearinghouse for parent involvement resources. Louisiana also seeks to cultivate parent involvement initiatives at the local level. The state must identify parent advocates who will develop strategies to increase parent involvement, resolve complaints from parents, and improve communications between schools. Grant money from the state is available for innovative family-school partnership projects and professional development programs for teachers, staff, and parents. The state also sponsors pilot programs for family literacy. (West's Louisiana Revised Statutes Annotated §§ 17:14, 17:406-406.5)

Maine

Maine has proposed establishing a task force to investigate the most effective means of support parents as children's first teachers. The task force would establish a comprehensive model for early education and parent support, review existing programs to ensure there is a continuum of support services, and investigate establishing a clearinghouse for related information. Maine also declares that school restructuring is dependant on community involvement and should include a reassessment of the role of parents in schools. (Maine Revised Statutes Annotated Title 20, § 8; 1997 Maine Laws 1287)

Maryland

Maryland involves parents in reforming schools and implementing special projects. Each school must develop an improvement plan through a school-based decision making process approved by the district and involving parents. Family and community involvement are a required part of a state plan to integrate multiculturalism into all subject areas. Recently, the state established a Parent and Community Advisory Board for the Baltimore City Public School System. The majority of the board must be parents and its purpose is to insure parental involvement in education policy and procedures. Finally, district application for state grant money to operate special programs for disruptive students must include plans for involving parents in the programs. (Annotated Code of Maryland, Education §§ 13A.05, 13A.06 7-303)

Massachusetts

Massachusetts has a broad program of including parents in advisory positions and helping schools to cultivate parent participation. At the state level, fourteen advisory councils have been established to make programmatic recommendations to the state board of education; each advisory board should include parents. The state advisory committee on educational policy must consult parents in articulating goals for accountability and high standards of quality for the entire system of education. The state commissioner of education may consult parents when drawing up and revising frameworks for core subjects. Locally, each school must create a school council with elected representatives from the Parent Teacher Organization and appoint an advisory board on health education that includes parents. In addition parents must have the opportunity, to the extent practicable, to examine materials for use in sex education and must be able to exempt their children from any part of the instruction.

Massachusetts also investigates and provides more direct methods for parents to participate in education. The state funds a demonstration project to assess various models of parent outreach programs. The state education agency must provide technical assistance on boosting parent involvement to school breakfast programs. Increasing parents' involvement in their child's education by utilizing distance learning is also an objective of the state educational technology plan. Finally, Massachusetts state law provides a procedure for parents and students may petition to have an unavailable class added to the school curriculum. (Annotated Laws of Massachusetts Ch. 15, § 1G; Ch. 15A, §§ 2, 3A; Ch. 69, §§ 1E, 1I; Ch.71, §§ 13, 32A, 84)

Michigan

Michigan emphasizes parents' rights to control their children's education. A state statute declares that parents have a fundamental right to direct the education of their children and that the purpose of public schools is to aid parents in developing the student's knowledge and skills. This principle results in a requirement that parents be allowed, within reasonable bounds, to review

materials and to observe classroom activities. In addition, state-funded compensatory education programs must include plans for parent involvement and referrals to community social services. (Michigan Compiled Laws §§ 15.1919, 380.1137, 380.10(936))

Minnesota

Minnesota requires the state to develop clear and comprehensive guidelines for involving parents in education. The state education agency must develop guidelines and model plans for parent involvement programs that will: engage the interests and talents of parents in meeting their children's needs; promote a healthy self concept among family members; provide parents an opportunity to learn about educational methodology; "provide creative learning experiences for parents or guardians and their school-age children, including involvement from parents or guardians of color"; encourage parents to participate in advisory boards; and encourage parents to help promote school desegregation. Model plans for parental involvement must include program goals, means of achieving the program goals, methods for informing parents about the program, and strategies for full participation of parents including LEP and minority parents. (1994 Minnesota Laws 126.69)

Mississippi

The "Alliance for Families" program established by the state focuses on improving education by increasing parent involvement. The program has several objectives: training administrators to cultivate community support, publishing a resource manual to help implement the program, and developing parent involvement plans that increase support of schools, improve communications, and promote reading at home. The program will provide a parent involvement plan tailored to each school's needs including a newsletter to parents, parent-teacher conferences, a survey of parents' perceptions about the school and the role of the home in education, an emphasis on parent-oriented programs at the school, a signed parent pledge, a student notebook to be signed by parents periodically, a focus on reading at home, and training for teachers, parents, and principals on participating in the program. In addition, districts must develop and implement programs to make schools family-centered; such programs include an annual parent conferences and a parent network based on Missouri's Parents as Teachers. Each district will identify one "Parent of the Year" and a statewide parent of the year will also be recognized. Federal program such as Title I must maintain a minimum level of parent involvement. Finally, parents have an explicit duty to attend school discipline conferences. (Mississippi Code Annotated §§ 37-3-61 to 337-3-73)

Missouri

Missouri has promoted parent involvement by providing funding for districts to develop their own programs. Increasing parent involvement is recognized as a "statewide area of need" making it an activity eligible for supplemental funding. Districts may apply for state aid to operate parent education programs designed for families who exhibit characteristics which produce at-risk children. Parent involvement is a required element of grant applications for supplemental state funds for students at risk of dropping out. Matching funds from the state are available for general parent involvement projects. Districts may consult parents when developing required individual plans of reading intervention. (Missouri Revised Statutes §§ 160.264, 160.530, 167.268, 167.280, 167.273)

Nebraska

The legislature that public schools should facilitate parental information about and involvement in educational practices. Each district must have a policy defining the rights of parents regarding testing policies, access to schools and records, curriculum matters, surveys administered to children, and exemptions for students from objectionable activities and surveys. The policy must also describe how the district will involve parents in schools. The district must include parent input in formulating the policy and hold a public hearing before voting on its adoption. The policy must be reviewed annually and either amended or reaffirmed by the board following a public hearing. (Revised Statutes of Nebraska §§ 79-4,242, 79-4,45, 79-530 to 79-533)

Nevada

Nevada requires that parents be consulted before placing their children in special programs and be included in site-based decision making. Districts choosing to implement school-based decision making programs must develop rules for reporting the progress of students to their parents and involving parents in schools and school councils. Schools must consult students' parents before placing the students in programs for disabled or gifted children. (Nevada Revised Statutes §§ 386.4154, 388.470)

New Hampshire

The state must consult with parents in developing statewide education standards and must effectively communicate the final standards to parents. The state assessment frameworks and reports must be understandable and widely disseminated to parents so that informed decisions can be made concerning curriculum, in-service education, instructional improvement, teacher training, resource allocation, and staffing. Quality student assessments developed by the district must accompany the state assessments reports issued to parents. (New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated §§ 193-C:1, 193-C:3)

New Jersey

New Jerseys requires the state education agency take positive steps to involve parents in education. The school district superintendent must provide a mechanism in each school for parent involvement in addition to providing at least one public meeting per semester scheduled to ensure maximum public participation. Effective school plans, required by the state, must provide mechanisms to encourage parent participation in the education process. At the district level New Jersey's parent involvement provisions are more narrow. Optional education programs to prevent sexual assault must allow parents who submit a written, moral objection to excuse their children from participating. Districts must publicize policies on promotion and rededication and, where appropriate, develop them with parents' input. In fact, parents must be given notice if their child's progress is not sufficient to meet promotion standards and they must have procedures to appeal promotion-retention decisions. (New Jersey Statutes Annotated 18A:7A-35, 18A:6-33.11, 18A:7A-35, 18A:35-4.9)

New Mexico

New Mexico currently involves parents in choosing instructional materials, developing discipline policies, and formulating district budgets. It will soon require a comprehensive accountability reports from districts. Beginning in 1998 the state must provide parents an annual accountability report that contains information about school safety, dropout rate, attendance, parent involvement and student achievement as measured by a nationally norm-referenced test or a validated

performance-based instrument. The annual report must include the results of a parent survey incorporating questions about parent-school communication, quality of instruction and extracurricular, resources, personnel, instructional practices and the parent's perceptions of the teachers' expectations of their students. Presently, school discipline policies developed by districts or individual schools must include parents in the policy development.

Parents must be involved in the adoption of instructional materials both at the state and district level. Districts must give parents notice and an opportunity to comment on the district budget proposals for each fiscal year. The state is restricted from approving a temporary operating budget of any district that fails to show that parental involvement was solicited in the budget process. Lastly, state-funded preschool programs must have a strong parental involvement component and state funds may be used to support a home-based early childhood education program. (New Mexico Statutes Annotated §§ 22-15-8, 22-5-4.3, 22-8-10, 22-8-11, 228-19.1)

New York

New York includes parent participation provisions in several of its special programs and makes school principals accountable for pursuing parent involvement. Application for recognition as a high achieving "Twenty-First Century School" must include a plan, developed in conjunction with parents, for helping all students achieve high standards. Parents must have input in the content, standards, and assessments incorporated into this program. Evidence of strong parent support is a selection criterion for this recognition. The "Twenty-First Century Schools Committee" established to advise the commissioner should include some parents in its membership. Competitive grants are available to institutions providing academic support services to at-risk students, but grant proposals must facilitate parent involvement where possible. The district superintendent is responsible for an annual evaluation of each principle's performance with respect to educational effectiveness and school performance, including effectiveness in maintaining school discipline, promoting student achievement, and encouraging parental involvement. (New York Education Law §§ 309-a, 612, 2590-f)

North Carolina

North Carolina articulates a general commitment to involving parents in education and has specific provisions for districts to promote parent involvement. The state must provide sequential, age-appropriate education that includes strategies to involve parents in education. Schools are encouraged to include comprehensive parent involvement programs in their performance-based accountability plans. Parents must be included on school improvement teams that develop annual school improvement plans to improve student performance and those parents must reflect the racial and socioeconomic composition of the students enrolled in that school and cannot be members of the building-level staff. Furthermore, to assure that parents have a substantial role in developing school improvement plans, the school improvement team meetings must be held at a convenient time to assure substantial parent participation.

Every local board of education may employ one or more community schools coordinators. These coordinators will be responsible for supporting community school advisory councils and public school officials, fostering cooperation between the district and community agencies, and encouraging maximum use of community volunteers in the public schools. Proposals to participate in Project Genesis, an innovative management initiative, will be reviewed by a district-appointed advisory committee including parents. Project Genesis plans must include an accountability framework addressing parent satisfaction and involvement. Efforts to expand the project will give priority to low performing schools using parent involvement as a measure of performance.

North Carolina also involves parents in health education. The state must develop a program for AIDS education that emphasizes parental involvement. Parents must be given the opportunity to review curricula concerning sex education, STDs or AIDS before children participate in the program. Finally, parents may take up to four hours leave from work to participate in school activities although employers are permitted to require 48 hours notice and written proof that the time was used for a school visit. (General Statutes of North Carolina §§ 95-28.3, 115C-105.27, 115C-209, 115C-238.8, 115C-238.23, 115C-81)

North Dakota

North Dakota currently has little in its statutes concerning parent involvement. The state education agency must develop guidelines for alternative learning programs ensuring that students' parents are involved in the decision to enter such a program. (North Dakota Century Code § 115c-12)

Ohio

Ohio mandates that districts expand efforts to increase parent participation and publicizes successful parent involvement initiative. Each district must adopt a policy on parental involvement designed to build consistent and effective communication between the parents of students enrolled in the district and the teachers and administrators assigned to the schools their children attend. The policy must allow parents to be actively involved in their children's education and must publicize the importance of parent involvement in academic achievement, methods of supporting children's progress in school and learning at home. The state also must encourage, discover, and publicize programs that actively involve parents in decision-making. (Ohio Revised Code Annotated § 3301.131, 3313.472)

Oklahoma

Oklahoma pursues parent involvement through improved teacher education, parent review of materials, and parent participation in policy making. Teacher preparation must include skills for working with parents and skills for involving the community in education. Districts must appoint parents, among others, to professional development committees which will adopt programs for the professional development on teachers in the district. Parents may also participate in an advisory capacity. The process of evaluating whether a district curriculum meets the statutory requirement for basic skills must include parents. The superintendent must notify parents of their rights to withdraw their child from sex education and to review any sex education curricula or survey of sexual behavior or attitudes prior to its presentation to students. Lastly, parents must be consulted on several policy decisions.

Prior to implementing a continuous school program in any school of the district, the school district's board of education must consult the parents of pupils who would be affected by the change. Also, districts must "make an effort" to involve parents in developing student control and discipline policy. Oklahoma also uses parent involvement as a measure of school quality. Parent involvement rates are an indicator for identifying low performing schools. High challenge schools are encouraged to pursue parent involvement strategies to improve academic achievement. Parental involvement will be used as one measure of school improvement progress. (Oklahoma Statutes Title 70, §§ 6-114, 6-185, 6-194, 10-10.2, 11-103, 11-103.3, 11-105.1, 1210.541, 1210.542, 4515)

Oregon

Oregon encourages but does not mandate that schools pursue parent involvement. The legislature has issued three non-binding recommendations: that employers extend to parents additional leave for participating in school activities; that districts form partnerships with the private sector to provide workplace-based professional development for their education staff; and that districts involve parents in site-based decision making as well as in establishing and implementing educational goals. The state has declared that emphasizing parental involvement in school activities is a characteristic of a proper education system. One purpose of the "21st Century Schools Program" reform is to encourage districts to establish measurable goals for educational attainment, including increased parent involvement. (Oregon Revised Statutes §§ 329.025, 329.55, 329.125)

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania currently has little in its statutes concerning parent involvement. However, optional dropout prevention programs must involve parents of those students enrolled in the program. (24 Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes § 6604)

Rhode Island

Rhode Island provides funds for parent involvement programs. In 1996 $100,000 was appropriated to establish a training program for parents, particularly parents of preschool children, and to make competitive grants available to districts for exemplary parent involvement programs. A statewide report including information on student and teacher attendance rates, standardized test scores, demographic profiles, and poll results from students, parents and teachers must be published by the state annually. Parents must comprise half of the committees to be formed at each school for determining how to spend state professional development funds. The state must support local programs that involve parents to prevent school violence and have parents participate in developing guidelines for punishing firearm possession in schools. Rhode Island also declares in its school-to-work statute that students and parents shall be involved in the students' choices of career paths, but does not describe specifically what role parents will play. (General Laws of Rhode Island §§ 16-21-20, 16-21-18, 16-55-32, 16-60-4)

South Carolina

South Carolina has a detailed program for parent involvement in middle schools. The state education agency has developed a parent involvement program for grades four through eight to enhance communication, increase accountability, and offer parents an opportunity to be proactive. Programs should include school visits, and training sessions on student discipline, the importance of homework, and understanding standardized tests. Teachers must maintain a record of annual parent conferences signed by both the teacher and parent and identifying the date, time and "response of parent-teacher conference." (Code of Laws of South Carolina 1976 Annotated § 59-1-454)

South Dakota

South Dakota provides funding for parent involvement programs and requires that parent be included in the application process for waivers of administration rules. Grants from the youth-at-risk education trust fund are available for local projects that benefit youth by improving parental involvement. Also, districts seeking to be exempted from administrative rules in order to pursue specific reforms must hold a public hearing on the reform plan and waivers sought and must

include in their request for waiver a method for evaluation that includes the involving of parents. (South Dakota Codified Laws §§ 13-14-8, 13-14-12, 13-5-34)

Tennessee

Tennessee requires that districts encourage parents to meet with teachers. Districts must establish a program where parents and faculty meet at least twice a year. Districts may also develop a program for the voluntary participation of parents in their child's school. Involvement should be varied and should allow parent to observe and understand the school. The principal may keep records of the program's effectiveness and the district may schedule alternative meetings of the parent-teacher association to permit working parents to attend. The state education agency may establish guidelines for districts to develop programs, and may assure that each district has a program.

Districts may establish family resource centers to coordinate state and community services for families with children. The local school board will appoint community service providers and parents to serve on an advisory council for each family resource center. Parents must comprise a majority of each advisory council. Local education agencies with state approved family resource centers may be given priority in receiving additional state funding for formal parent involvement programs in elementary schools. Parents may excuse their children from health education with a written note state that they have personally examined the materials or have conferred directly with the student's instructor, guidance counselor or principal. (Tennessee Code Annotated §§ 49-6-7001, 49-6-7002, 49-6-130, 49-2-115)

Texas

In addition to several declarations about the importance of parent involvement, Texas requires that the state include parents in some policy making. "Parental involvement in the school is essential for the maximum educational achievement of a child." The legislature further declared that parents are partners in education and will be encouraged to actively participate in creating and implementing educational programs. One of the fundamental objectives of public education is to make parents full partners with educators in the instruction of their children. Each board of trustees is required to cooperate with parent-teacher organizations that promote parent involvement in school activities. The state education agency must cultivate the direct participation of parents in identifying the essential knowledge and skills which students will be required to demonstrate and by which textbooks will be evaluated. The state education agency must also consult with parents to identify the essential knowledge and skills of each subject in the enrichment curriculum to be used by districts. (Texas Education Code Annotated §§ 4.001 26.001 28.002)

Utah

Utah has clear, statewide policies supporting parent involvement and specific requirements for districts to implement it. The intent of the legislature is to help maintain a public education system that emphasizes the involvement of educators, parents, and the community in the educational process by including them in developing educational goals and making school-based decisions. It is state policy to expect parents to prepare their children to learn, to expect schools and districts to provide parents opportunities to be involved in schooling, to expect employers to recognize the need for parent to engage in education related activities, and to expect education administrators at all levels work with employers to facilitate greater interaction between parents and schools.

Each district must adopt a policy on parental involvement that enhances communication, allows parents to be actively involved in education, and informs parents of the importance of participat-

ing in their child's education and of groups that train parents to help improve their child's academic success. Utah also requires parent involvement in its special programs. One requirement for voluntary participation in the Centennial Schools Program is providing for extensive involvement by parents in developing a personalized education plan for each student at the school. A Centennial school may use its funding allocation to train teachers and administrators how to interact with parents and parent advisory groups. The Centennial Schools task force must include parents as members, and will make recommendations on the need for strong parental involvement in the schools. In distributing $3,000,000 appropriated for district Character Education Programs, the highest priority is given to proposals in which parents are involved in all phases of the program's design, implementation, and evaluation. (Utah Code Annotated §§ 53-17a-131.6, 53-17a-131.9, 53A-1a-104, 53A-1a-105, 53A-1a-302, 53A-1a-303)

Vermont

Vermont insists that districts include parents in school reform plans and that early education programs involve parents. Schools must include parents in developing and implementing required comprehensive action plans for goals and strategies focused on improving student performance. Grant proposals for state funds to operate voluntary, early education programs will be evaluated on, among other criteria, whether the program includes voluntary training for parents and whether parents will be actively involved in the program design and decisions about services. (16 Vermont Statutes Annotated § 3487; 1997 Acts and Resolves of Vermont 527)

Virginia

Virginia currently has little in its statutes concerning parent involvement. Every parent that is required to send their child to a public school has the right to review the family life curricula and a summary of the implementation plan. Programs should encourage [illegible]ntal guidance and involvement in the instruction of students. (Code of Virginia Anno[illegible]ed § 22.1-207.2)

Washington

The goal of each school district is, with the involvement of parents, to give all students an opportunity to read and communicate well, know the core concepts of a variety of disciplines, think clearly, and understand the impact of education on future opportunities. The Superintendent of Public Instruction will establish a center for the improvement of public learning to serve as a clearinghouse for successful parent involvement programs, to develop and distribute parent involvement materials, to increase public awareness about the importance of public awareness, to identify obstacles to greater parent involvement, and to recommend strategies for parents to become involved. Parents must be involved in developing written procedures for administering discipline and those procedures must make every reasonable attempt to involve parents in the resolution of disciplinary problems.

Districts may establish voluntary schools or programs that require students to wear a uniform, parents to participate in their child's education, and schools to uphold more stringent standards of discipline. Districts may also establish similar schools that students subject for expulsion or suspension may be required to attend but in which parents given counseling and are encouraged, rather than required, to participate. Districts must consult parents in developing an AIDS prevention program, allow parents to experience the presentation before it is given to students, and permit parents to withdraw their children from the program. (Revised Code of Washington §§ 28A.150.210, 28A.230.070, 28A.300.130, 28A.320.140, 28A.600.020)

West Virginia

West Virginia has provisions for parent involvement at the state, district, and school level.

The governor has appointed a Cabinet on Children and Families works to integrate various state programs supporting families and enhancing the development of children. Every school must establish a local school improvement council consisting of eleven members, three of whom must be parents elected by parents. Councils may adopt programs to encourage parent or business involvement, foster community use of school facilities, and sponsor volunteer or mentorship programs. County boards must appoint a county steering committee, including parents, to develop and implement a system of career education for students. Every student must consult with her parent and school advisor to create an individualized student transition plan covering grades 9-12 and the first year after high school graduation. (West Virginia Code §§ 5-26-3, 18-2e-6, 18-5A-2)

Wisconsin

"Achievement guarantee contracts" may be formed between districts and the state education agency to provide additional funds for low-income schools. Contracts must include methods for parent involvement in the school's performance objectives. Private schools under contract with the state to provide education to students must also provide diverse opportunities for parents to participate in the school's programs. Each school district that institutes a bilingual-bicultural education program must establish an advisory board including parents. Grant application for supplemental state funds must include plans for electing a council with parent members for advising the school board. Schools receiving grant funds must annually report the number, content, and participation rates of parent involvement activities to the state superintendent of substance abuse programs. (Wisconsin Statutes §§ 115.98 115.362 118.43)

Wyoming

Wyoming's sole statutory provision for parent involvement relates to parent participation in planning appropriate services for minors residing in state run training schools for the mentally disabled. (Wyoming Statutes Annotated § 25-5-102)

Appendix C

Minneapolis Public Schools Family Involvement Standards

This example of a local school district policy is included to show how many of the concepts in this report can be incorporated into local policy.

Purpose

The Minneapolis Public Schools Family Involvement Standards were developed to:

- create a common vision of what needs to be in place for there to be quality family involvement across the district;
- set expectations for everyone in the district concerning the level of family involvement necessary for student success;
- increase and improve the involvement of family members in their children's education;
- specify what needs to happen at the district, school, classroom, and home levels.

Use

The attached format of the Minneapolis Public Family Involvement Standards is primarily intended for discussion and information.

The document is also available in an audit/assessment format that can be used to:

- conduct a family involvement audit of any or all four levels;
- develop family involvement programs;
- set goals and priorities related to family involvement.

Contact the Office of Family Involvement at (612) 627-2255 to request a copy of the audit/assessment format.

I. DISTRICT LEVEL

Q: Who is responsible for making it happen?

A: The district leadership defined as the Board of Education, Superintendency, Executive Directors, and central administration staff.

Standard D1: There is a district policy adopted by the Minneapolis Board of Education that identifies clear and measurable goals for family involvement.

Indicators:

1. There is a written document that is made public through intentional, strategic, thorough, and frequent notifications.
2. The district's family involvement policy document is a clear and understandable by all families, community members, and staff.
3. The district's family involvement policy is written and disseminated in English and other languages.

Standard D2: The district leadership actively supports staff and promotes efforts that increase the level and quality of family involvement.

Indicators:

1. Measurable goals for increasing the level and quality of family involvement are required as part of the every School Improvement Plan.
2. All district-level departments, offices, and staff are expected to be friendly, knowledgeable, and open points of contact for all families.
3. The district has adequate staff and resources to implement the family involvement standards.
4. Funding is provided to schools to increase the level and quality of family involvement.
5. Schools that make significant progress in increasing the level and quality of family involvement are recognized.
6. Staff development is provided for teachers, families, administrators, staff, and others on how to increase the level and quality of family involvement.
7. There is a clearinghouse to gather best practices, ideas, materials, new approaches, research, and other program information in order to help schools improve their family involvement programs.

Standard D3: The district helps schools understand and implement school and classroom level family involvement standards.

Indicators:

1. The district has established processes for schools to access training, technical assistance, and information.
2. The Office of Family Involvement, with help from other district staff, provides information to schools to help them become familiar with and understand the school, classroom, and home level standards for family involvement.
3. Schools are satisfied with the level of support they receive from the district for their efforts to implement the school level family involvement standards.

Standard D4: The district leadership actively raises the community's awareness of how important family involvement is to students' success and academic achievement.

Indicators:

1. The Office of Family Involvement organizes and holds a family involvement public information campaign.
2. There are district-level communications (speeches, newsletters, workshops, etc.) that stress the importance of family involvement in education.
3. The district works in collaboration with community agencies to express and encourage the importance of family involvement.

Standard D5: Schools' efforts to increase the level and quality of family involvement are documented, monitored, and evaluated, and best examples of what works are shared.

Indicators:

1. The staff of Research Evaluation and Assessment, School and Site Services, and the Office of Family Involvement work collaboratively with schools to document, monitor, and evaluate family involvement initiatives.
2. Technical assistance is provided to schools by the Office of Family Involvement and other service units appropriate to monitor and evaluated family involvement strategies that produce specific results for students, parents, teachers, school staff, and others.
3. Annual conferences or events are held to allow parents, teachers, administrators, students, community members, and others to share ideas and progress that is made each year, solve problems, share best practices, and plan for the future.

Standard D6: Everyone who works for the district is expected to be friendly and respectful and treat families as partners in their children's education.

Indicators:

1. People working for the school district are friendly towards, respectful of, and helpful to all families.
2. All families receive quality customer service from people working for the school district.

Standard D7: The district has a regular process for involving a wide range of families in district-level efforts such as setting policy and planning.

Indicators:

1. The district has district-level, decision-making and advisory committees dealing with district concerns such as budget, curriculum, and assessment, and each committee includes parents/guardians.
2. The district provides different ways for individual families to voice concerns, raise issues, and resolve problems.
3. The district has "beyond-the-building" general interest groups where families representing schools can receive information, discuss issues, and make policy recommendations.

Standard D8: The district has two-way communication with families that is regular, timely, and meaningful.

Indicators:

1. Families are well-informed and up-to-date on important district issues and understand the major goals of the district.
2. The district has a variety of publications and other regular communications with families.
3. Written communications are clear, understandable, and available in languages other than English as appropriate.
4. The district has several ways of listening to parents and engaging them in two-way communication (for example, giving time to families at Board meetings, holding open forums).

II. SCHOOL LEVEL

Q: Who is responsible for making it happen?

A: Members of the school community including the principal, teachers, clerical and support staff, educational assistants, social worker(s), family/community liaison, family members, students and community representatives.

Standard S1: Family involvement is incorporated as a strategy to achieve any goal in the School Improvement Plan.

Indicators:

1. Goals in the School Improvement Plan have action items and desired outcomes related to family involvement that are measurable.

2. The School Improvement Plan is developed with input from school staff, teachers, families, and community members.

Standard S2: Everyone who works at the school strongly believes that family involvement is important to student's success and academic achievement.

Indicators:

1. The school has formal, written policies or vision statements describing its commitment to increase the level and quality of family involvement in appropriate language(s).
2. The school has a family liaison responsible for promoting family involvement and school- family-community partnerships.
3. Funding is allocated to family involvement initiatives.
4. There is staff allotment to work on increasing the level and quality of family involvement.
5. The school provides and clearly defines multiple opportunities for all families to be involved in their children's education at home and at school.
6. Home visits are made as appropriate.

Standard S3: School staff use creative ways of reaching out to families who have not been involved in their children's education.

Indicators:

1. There is a family liaison to make contact and develop relationships with families.
2. Resources are committed to boost involvement such as child care, transportation, weekend and evening meetings at school and in the community, stipends.
3. Resources are committed to pursue the involvement of families from diverse cultures.
4. There is a comprehensive family education program to meet the changing needs of families.
5. Parent education is made available for family members in parenting roles.
6. The school actively experiments with off-site neighborhood-based activities that meet families' needs.

Standard S4: There is a strong partnership among school staff, students, families, and community members that increases students' success and academic achievement.

Indicators:

1. Everyone who works at the school is expected to be knowledgeable and friendly towards all families and treat them with respect.
2. There is a group of people—teachers, administrators, schools staff, family members, students (as appropriate), and others—who work together on increasing the level and quality of family involvement (for example, site council sub-committee, family involvement action team).
3. Family members are included as trainers, presenters, and participants in staff development activities as appropriate.
4. Resources and services from the broader community (e.g., parks, agencies, churches, etc.) are identified and drawn upon to strengthen student learning and development.
5. Activities are held at varied times to accommodate families' needs.
6. Everyone who works at the school is expected to understand, value, and encourage the many ways that families support their children's learning.

Standard S5: The principal and site council provide active leadership in increasing the level and quality of family involvement in children's education.

Indicators:

1. The principal and site council direct adequate resources (financial, time, human) toward family involvement initiatives.
2. The principal and site council set high expectations of staff and families to work together to increase student success and academic achievement.
3. The principal and site council monitor the results of the school's initiatives to increase the level and quality of family involvement.
4. The principal and site council are approachable and provide opportunities for dialogue with families (for example, monthly breakfasts with the principal).

Standard S6: The school is responsive to the needs of its families.

Indicators:

1. Handbooks, newsletters, report cards and other communication are easy to understand and translated as appropriate.
2. Information is provided to families on how to meet their basic obligations such as providing shelter, proper nutrition, clothing, and creating a home environment that supports academic success.
3. Guidance and information is provided to families on how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.
4. School staff are familiar with options and resources available through the district (e.g., parent education, adult literacy, work skills enhancement) and actively connect families with these resources.

Standard S7: School staff, families, and community members work together to plan, put into action, and evaluate family involvement efforts.

Indicators:

1. The school has a plan and process in place to identify and implement those family involvement standards that are given highest priority and communicates this plan to the larger school community.
2. In-service education and staff development opportunities related to working effectively with families are provided for school staff, family and community members (for example, making schools family-friendly, working with diverse cultures, communicating with families, designing homework that engages families).
3. Family involvement initiatives are based on identified needs and desired outcomes.
4. There is a group of people—teachers, administrators, schools staff, family members, students (as appropriate), and others—who work together on increasing the level and quality of family involvement (for example, site council sub-committee, family involvement action team).

Standard S8: Everyone who works at the school draws upon the knowledge and expertise of all families to support the school as a whole.

Indicators:

1. Everyone who works for the school is expected to be knowledgeable and friendly towards all families and treat them with respect.
2. Parents or other family members serve on school committees and have meaningful decision- making roles.
3. The school provides a variety of well-planned and well-communicated volunteer opportunities for family and community members.

III. CLASSROOM LEVEL

Q: Who is responsible for making it happen?

A: Classroom teachers, educational assistants, and other staff who directly engage in instruction.

Standard C1: Families are seen and treated as partners in their children's education by teachers and other instructional staff.

Indicators:

1. Teachers and instructional staff provide families with clear information on the school curriculum content standards, class syllabi, class schedules, programs, policies, and procedures.
2. Family members are welcome in the classroom and volunteer opportunities, responsibilities, and expectations are made clear and agreed upon by the teacher and family member.
3. Families are encouraged to support their children's learning at home and given specific suggestions on how they can best do this in order to complement and reinforce what is being taught at school.
4. There is communication between he family and teacher that is regular, two-way, and focuses on building trust and creating a relationship.
5. Families are kept up-to-date on their children's progress through regular communication such as notes sent home, phone calls, newsletters, report cards, newsletters, and conferences.
6. Teachers are open to feedback from families.
7. Feedback given to families on their child's progress balances the positive and negative.

Standard C2: Each family's experience, knowledge, and culture are respected and valued by teachers and other instructional staff.

Indicators:

1. Interpreters are provided as necessary.
2. Teachers and other instructional staff are knowledgeable about families' culture, background and experience.
3. Families are invited to share their experience, knowledge, and culture with school staff, teachers, and students.
4. Teachers and instructional staff work to develop partnerships with all families, not just those who volunteer, attend meetings, or are similar in culture, race, or socioeconomic background.
5. Teachers and instructional staff are trained in multi-cultural, gender-fair, and disability-aware practices and use them in working with families.

IV. HOME LEVEL

Q: Who is responsible for making it happen?

A: Parents, guardians, family members, and others who are in parenting roles and the child's primary care givers.

Standard H1: The family supports lifelong learning for its members, particularly children.

Indicators:

1. The home environment actively supports learning through reading, writing, conversations, and discussions among family members.
2. There is a family routine that supports learning such as a set time for studying, watching television, and going to bed.
3. There is positive communication between family members and children.
4. Parents and family members encourage children by asking

about schoolwork and providing an appropriate atmosphere for doing homework.
5. Parents and family members encourage learning and the love of learning.
6. Reading is encouraged.
7. Parents and family members meeting their basic obligations such as providing shelter, proper nutrition, and clothing for children to the best of their ability.
8. Parents and family members know what community resources exist and utilize them to meet their family and children's needs.

Standard H2: The family has high but reasonable expectations of each child's educational achievement and makes there expectations clear.

Indicators:

1. Children's development and progress in school are encouraged through family discussions, positive reinforcement, and modeling appropriate behavior such as love of learning, discipline.
2. There is a genuine interest in the child's growth and positive development.
3. The family has clear rules and consequences.
4. Parents and family members make sure their children get to school on time and attend school regularly.

Standard H3: Parents and family members understand what is expected of them in supporting their child's success in school.

Indicators:

1. Parents and family members are friendly towards and respectful of school staff and treat them as partners in their children's education.
2. Parents and family members respond to communication sent home in a timely manner by sending notes back, returning phone calls, and responding to other requests.
3. Parents and family members regularly attend parent/teacher conferences in a timely manner and ask questions related to their child's academic progress.
4. Parents and family members communicate to school staff what they expect of the school in an appropriate and respectful manner.

Standard H4: Parents and family members actively support the school and district's efforts to provide quality education to all students.

Indicators:

1. Parents and family members are actively involved at the school (for example, volunteering in the classroom, serving on committees, attending parent/teacher conferences regularly, organizing events, and helping school staff in other ways).
2. Parents and family members are actively involved in district initiatives (for example, serving on the Parent Partnership Council or attending its meetings, serving on other district committees).

Appendix D

Summary Chart of School Stories

Site
Engelhard Elementary School
1004 S. First St.
Louisville KY 40203
(502) 485-8246
Grades K-5

Contact
Theresa Jensen, Principal

Features
- 84% free/reduced lunch; 50% African American; 48% White.
- Year-round school (200 days); Title I schoolwide used to reduce class size (grades 4-5); Reading Recovery in primary; heterogeneous grouping.
- Report cards, curriculum aligned to KERA standards.
- Strong SBDM council; extensive subcommittees; open door policy; home visits; "constant conversations."
- RQP training for families, principal a facilitator.
- Data study revealed problems for African American boys; pulled in whole community to develop solutions (year-round program, extended day program a result).

Gains
Scores up 50% across the board (from 24.9% to 36.8% passing KIRIS in 4 years)
Mobility rate down from 49% to 17%

Site
Midway High School
530 Loudon Hwy.
Kingston, TN 37763
(423) 376-5645
Grades 9-12

Contact
Houston Raby, Principal

Features
- 200 students, at least 45% free lunch, almost all low-income white. 51% go to college.
- Three years ago, about to be closed. County refused to repair 50 year-old building. Parents rallied to save.
- Multi-million $ renovation, revamped the curriculum.
- School has become agricultural service center that repairs farm equipment, buys and lends equipment. Students learn math, science, writing, social studies via work with local farming businesses.
- Moved to a 4-period day, added high substance electives like anatomy, pre-calculus, journalism, nutritional science.

Gains
Student average is 1-2 points above state average. Number of students on honor roll has doubled.

Site	Features	Gains
Norwood Park Elementary School 5900 N. Nina Ave. Chicago, IL 60631 (773) 534-1198 **Contact** William Meuer. Principal; Elliott Marks, LSC chair and parent	• 51% low-income; 49% white, 23% African American, 23% Hispanic, 5% Asian. • Active LSC, created all-day kindergarten and expanded preschool based on parent polling. • Child-centered, developmentally oriented school; hands-on instruction. • Parents pressed for more welcoming school, monitor standards. • Lower mobility allows rise in standards each year.	1990-97 poverty up from 9% to 51%, mobility rate down (48% to 8%); math up (28 to 57); reading up (31 to 52) (ITBS)
Site	**Features**	**Gains**
Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School 1669 Dorchester Ave. Dorchester, MA 02222 (617) 635-8725 **Contact** William Henderson, Principal	• 70% low-income; 55% African American, 34% White, 11% Hispanic and Asian. • Model inclusion school, designed to educate children with disabilities in the regular classroom. • School created at demand of parents, after lawsuit against BPS settled. • School uses Boston's Citywide Learning Standards, trains parents about standards. • Strong SBM council, family resource center, and family outreach program.	Significant gains Stanford 9 test, 1996-7; Reading 64%, Math 70%, up from 44% and 48% in 1989-90. Attendance 98%, suspensions rare.
Site	**Features**	**Gains**
Lucy D. Slowe Elementary School 1404 Jackson St., NE Washington, DC 20017 (202) 576-6075 Grades PreK-6 **Contact** Dr. Kaye Williams, Principal	• 615 students, 95% low income, 99.5% African American. • Comer school. Philosophy: any teacher should be comfortable here as a parent and willing to put their child in this school. About 20% of staff do. • Major focus on literacy, all children read by end of 3rd grade, strong school librarian. Title I schoolwide, use for aides and Saturday academy (11 weeks a year). Parent Center in library. • Parents cover classes when teachers do Comer staff development. Teachers leave lesson plans. • Whole language, no tracking, interdisciplinary themes, no pull-outs for Title I. • New Standards Project standards.	1996-97 CTBS scores: Reading 82% Math 83% Language 70% Science 72% (national average is 50%)

Site	Features	Gains
Vaughn Street School 13330 Vaughn St. San Fernando, CA 91340 (818) 896-7461 **Contact** Yvonne Chan, Director	• 99.4% free/reduced lunch; 95% Hispanic; 5% African American; Schoolwide Title I. Charter school. • Governing council 50%. parents/community; many subcommittees. • Family Center, one-stop shop for social services. • Year-round school, 200-day session, extended day, school readiness network. • Diverse instructional strategies, coop learning, meaning-centered curriculum, authentic assessment. • Reduced class size (grades 1,2,3 1:20; 4,5,6 1:23).	Passing Aprenda test 1991-1996: reading 30-53% math 11-50% language 25-53% Attendance 99.4% LEP-English up 3x

Site	Features	Gains
Ysleta Elementary School 8624 Dorbandt El Paso, TX 79907 (915) 859-8121 **Contact** Dolores De Avila, Principal Susanna Navarro, Director El Paso Collaborative	• 95% low-income; 98% Hispanic; schoolwide Title I. • IAF organizers work closely with school. • Vertical grouping. • Parents on standards team, help design scoring guides, look at student work. • Staff development open to families. • Parent Center, paid liaison.	Passing TAAS: 71% reading 78% math 67% writing (1997)

Appendix E

People and Organizations Attending "Advancing Parent Involvement in School Reform" In Del Mar, California, February 7-9, 1997

The Achievement Council

Participant:
Joyce Germaine Watts
Associate Director
Address:
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General description:
The Achievement Council is a non-profit organization that assists districts, schools and communities in California and several cities across the country to engage in systemic change aimed at closing the achievement gap between urban students and their suburban counterparts. The Council's mission is to be a collaborative partner helping to develop the capacity of educators, parents, support staff and community members to examine and eliminate the beliefs, expectations, policies, practices and structures that undermine their efforts to improve achievement.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
The Achievement Council works to nurture relationships between parents and educators that are respectful, trusting, inter-dependent and collaborative. Using alternative methodologies, the Council assists parents to acquire or reinforce the skills, strategies, confidence and resources for effective participation in a systemic change effort that will help all students meet high standards. Wherever possible, the Council develops coalitions with community-based groups that can serve as a base to build the infrastructure for organized parent engagement in improving education over the long term and can promote school reform as an integral component of a larger community development effort.

ACORN

Participant:
Steven Kest
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General description:
ACORN was founded in Little Rock Arkansas in 1970. ACORN has one over-riding goal: to organize low and moderate income communities, and to build powerful, deeply rooted neighborhood organizations that can fight and win on the issues that are central to the lives of ACORN members and their communities.

Over the past 27 years, ACORN has built an organization that now has more than 700 neighborhood chapters in 40 cities located in 22 states, with over 125,000 dues paying and participating family members.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
ACORN organizes and trains low income parents to take action collectively to improve the schools in their neighborhoods. Our approaches range from creating new parent-initiated public schools to broad-based campaigns to change school policies system-wide. ACORN public schools are characterized by high levels of parent and community involvement, including a formal role for parents in school governance. ACORN school reform campaigns have focused on issues of access and equity, and have demanded that schools in lower income neighborhoods receive the same levels of resources, programs, course work and curriculums as exist in upper income communities.

Center for Youth Development and Policy Research/Academy for Educational Development

Participant:
Richard Murphy
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General description:
The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research is a division of the Academy for Educational

Development, a nonprofit service organization committed to addressing human development needs in the United States and throughout the world.

The work of the Center includes conducting and synthesizing youth research and policy analyses, distributing information about exemplary youth programs and policies, and providing technical assistance to organizations, governments, and institutions who wish to improve their youth development efforts. The Center is in the process of building a long-term Youth Development Mobilization with local and national partners that will "double the number of people, places, and possibilities available to youth by the year 2005."

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
The Center is currently working on expanding the number of community schools which, with our definition, is viewed as an entry point for parents to be involved in school reform.

AVANCE, Inc. Family Support & Education Program

Participant:
Dr. Gloria G. Rodriquez,
President and CEO
Address:
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San Antonio, TX 78207
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(210)270-4630/(210)270-4612

General Description:
AVANCE is one of the oldest and largest programs supporting and educating parents of children under three years of age. A pioneer in the field of comprehensive, community-based services for high-risk families, AVANCE has implemented a strong, proven, and effective service delivery model since its founding in 1973. By providing support and education services to low-income predominately Hispanic families, AVANCE strives to strengthen the family unit; to enhance parenting skills; to promote educational success; and to foster the personal and economic success of parents.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
The curriculum and focus of AVANCE is to strengthen families and educate parents in their role as their children's first teacher starting at birth. Parents are helped to understand the developmental stages of growth in children and how the can create in stimulating safe, and nurturing environment that will prepare children for success in school. In these school settings, AVANCE provides parenting classes and adult literacy classes on site at elementary school campuses.

Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools

Participant:
Steve Jubb, Executive Director
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General Description:
The Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools is a regional network of secondary schools committed to increasing the learning and achievement of every student. These schools do this by working toward the goals of equity - equal opportunities for every student to learn - and access - access to high quality work and the support needed for every student to achieve.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
BayCES has found that strategies that focus on reaching out to parents and community in order to draw them in to the authentic work of schooling are the most successful means of involving parents and families in school reform. Strategies that focus only on outreach often meet with limited success, while those that engage parents in the work of the school and of their children in that school encourage more, and more diverse, involvement. One method BayCES often uses to involve parents and the community is habitual parent-teacher-community conversations about real students' learning needs and the work students really do. Such conversations provide a way for different groups to come to consensus on what matters most in the education of children. The Common Principles of CES also focus on getting to know youngsters and their families well.

Bay Area Male Involvement Network

Participants:
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General Description:
BAMIN is a network of 13 child care agencies in the San Francisco Bay Area who are working to increase the involvement of fathers and other men in the lives of their children.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
By providing encouragement, support

and opportunities for fathers and other men to become involved with the children being served in child care agencies. The men become more comfortable, more secure and better able to deal with the programs serving their families. This translates into better and more secure participants in their children's education throughout their school careers.

Center for Collaborative Education

Participant:
Heather Lewis, Co-Director
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General Description:
CCE is a school-based network of 38 member schools, K-12. Member schools share a set of principles focused on teaching and learning, and a commitment to involve parents, teachers, and school leaders in shaping school and organizational change. As a local affiliate of the Coalition of Essential Schools, CCE aims to strengthen the network of public schools that teach children to use their minds well, and to inspire others to do the same.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
Over the last two years, members schools formed small networks of 3-6 schools to support one another through peer accountability. The networks involve teachers, parents and students through democratic decision-making and develop accountability mechanisms that allow for self-correction and intervention.

Center for the Development of Schools and Communities

Participant:
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General Description:
CDSC provides training, technical assistance, and problem-solving support to urban school districts, policy making and direct service organization. Its core program, Responsive, Proactive Schools and Organizations, presents a series of interrelated exercises that:

(1) help participants operate from a strength, or resiliency model as opposed to one of deficit and risk, (2) teach participants how to identify and build upon the existing strengths of poor children, families and communities, (3) design policy and programs that directly and positively affect bottom-line outcomes: student achievement, family involvement, and mutually supportive relationships between schools, community organizations and the children and families they both serve.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
CDSC trains and coaches parents and professionals who work with children, youth and families. Training for parents addresses these issues: (1) effective parenting that builds upon the traditions and perspectives of the culture whose world view they hold, (2) how to assure that children do well in school and leave each grade competent and well taught, (3) how to work alone or with others as advocates for positive change.

CDSC also works with policy makers and practitioners in the design and implementation of effective policies, programs, practices that help them focus on positive changes in perspective, attitude, behaviors, skills as well as in the design and implementation of program activities that result in mutually supportive relations between families, schools, and/or service organizations who also work with children, youth and families.

Center for Law and Education

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cledc@erols.com
Web Page:
http://www.cleweb.org

General description:
The Center for Law and Education works to advance the right of all students, and low-income students in particular, to a high-quality education. The Center for Law and Education produces publications dealing with educational law, policy, and practice; conducts training; provides ongoing assistance to reform projects in selected sites; engages in federal monitoring and advocacy on behalf of students and parents. Among CLE's priority areas are Title I/academic reform, school-to-work/vocational reform, education of students with disabilities, early intervention services for infants and toddlers, tracking, testing, and parent/student/community involvement.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
CLE's Community Action for Public Schools (CAPS) is a network of parents, educators, students, advocates, and others committed to the right to high-quality education. CAPS members receive a newsletter on school reform and legal rights, legislative alerts, a telephone line for tools and tips and limited assistance on reform issues, access to the network members, other information, and discounts on publications. For information on joining CAPS or to recieve a publications catalog, contact the Center.

Chicago Communities in Schools

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General description:
Chicago Communities in Schools repositions existing community resources into schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. CCIS brokers and coordinates the services of volunteers, health and social service professionals, recreation specialists, mentors and tutors, juvenile officers and business people, and helps them provide their services inside schools where children and families can easily access them. In the 1996-1997 school year, over 5,500 students and families benefitted form services from 66 different agencies that CCIS linked to schools.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
CCIS creates an environment at the school where parents feel comfortable receiving services such as literacy programs, pre-employment training, English as a Second Language instruction, and domestic violence and family counseling. These services are in direct response to the parents' expressed needs.

Child Care Action Campaign

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General description:
Child Care Action Campaign (CCAC) works to increase investment in child care so that children can develop to their fullest potential and families can get and keep jobs. CCAC uses its information resources and strategic skills to engage leaders in education, government and business to improve child care and early education. We work directly with child care professionals, state and community leaders, policy makers, corporate executives, and advocates for children, including parents.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
In our project Child Care and Education: Right from the Start, CCAC is conducting a national search for public schools in low-income communities that have teamed with child care and/or Head Start to improve children's readiness for school, and achieve higher levels of student performance in primary grades. We hope to discover what types of parent participation are credited with promoting school improvements. We are profiling dozens of examples of striking success and will use them to inspire and guide initiatives in communities and states nationwide.

The Children's Aid Society

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General description:
The Children's Aid Society was founded in 1853 to care for New York City's poor and abandoned children. Today, the Society serves 100,000 children and families each year, with adoption and foster care services, health care, recreational camping, preventive services, job placement and emergency food and shelter. The Society focuses its work in New York City, but many of its programs have become national models, including free school lunches, free day schools, PTA's and kindergartens.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
From the onset of the Community School Project, the Society has worked hard to draw parents into the schools as full partners and to sustain high levels of involvement. Parents are very proud of the schools that they have helped to build, and actively advocate, together with the Society, for the community school model in educational reform debate.

Reginald Clark and Associates

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General description:
Clark and Associates, works with schools and other youth-serving agencies to promote student achievement through quality training of educators, parents, and community leaders. The firm's primary purpose is to assist educators, program service providers and parents with strategies and methods that increase their success at helping students read and learn.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
All of our support programs are linked to research studies which document impacts of teacher and parent behavior on student school performance.

Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform

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General description:
The Cross City Campaign is a strategic and active national network supporting urban school reform leaders, both inside and outside of school districts, through information, shared strategies, joint work, and support of local reform agendas.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
Parents, families and communities are a focus for all our work. We have written a "Community Organizing for School Reformers" curriculum that uses the life experiences of parents to help them build a powerful constituency at their school for improved student achievement. We will be training trainers in its use over the next year. We are just beginning a Parent Project on Standards to engage parents in understanding, shaping, and demanding high academic standards for their children. We work with parents on school-based budgeting, providing understandable budget materials for their use and developing their skills in budgeting linked to student achievement. Over the coming year, we will help parents hold their schools accountable by actively using data to track student achievement at the school.

Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin

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General description:
The Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin works to achieve equity and excellence at all levels of public education from preschool through higher education. The Dana Center's programs focus on curriculum, instruction and assessment; school improvement; information and communications systems; higher education; public engagement and volunteerism, as well as research and evaluation. These programs work in concert to influence systemic change that results in high levels of academic achievement for all students.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
The Dana Center recognizes the centrality of parent/family involvement in successful school reform, thus all school reform efforts include a strong emphasis on building partnerships between schools and families. For example, mathematics and science curriculum initiatives have included a major focus on family learning, including Family Math and Family Science. AmeriCorps projects have been designed in ways to model strategies for increasing the involvement of families in participating urban schools. Various technical assistance efforts have brought together professional associations and agencies along with parent groups to identify common goals and coordinate efforts in ways that build stronger school-family relationships. Dana Center research efforts have highlighted the importance of family involvement in the success of high-achieving schools.

Developmental Studies Center

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General description:
The Developmental Studies Center is a nonprofit educational organization established in 1980 to develop learner-centered programs that foster caring and integrate children's intellectual, ethical, and social development. Our mission is to deepen children's commitment to values such as kindness, helpfulness, personal responsibility, and respect for others, and to help children develop their capacities to think deeply and critically so they can continue learning throughout their lives. All our programs and materials grow out of our long-term collaborations with teachers, where we work together to create deep change in the classroom, school at large, and connection between home and school.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
DSC offers two simple programs for linking home and school. "Homeside Activities: Conversations and Activities That Bring Parents into Children's Classroom Learning" is a series of take-home activities in English and Spanish. It consists of eighteen 15- to 20- minute activities per grade level (K-6), which are typically introduced once or twice a month in class, completed at home with a parent or other care giver, and then incorporated into a follow-up classroom activity or discussion. "At Home in Our Schools: A Guide to School wide Activities That Build Community" is a practical tool for involving students, parents, teachers, administrators, staff, and seniors in building a caring school community.

The Education Trust

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General description:
The Education Trust was created to promote high academic achievement for all students, at all levels, kindergarten through college. While we know that all schools and colleges could better serve their students, our work focuses on the schools and colleges most often left behind in efforts to improve education: those serving low-income, Latino and African American students.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
Education Trust staff work alongside policy makers, parents, education professionals, community and business leaders - in cities and towns across the country - who are trying to transform their schools and colleges into institutions that genuinely serve all students. We bring lessons from these communities back to Washington to ensure that in the national policy debate there is a strong, clear voice for what's right for students in that debate.

Family Resource Coalition of America

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General description:
The Family Resource Coalition is a membership, consulting, and advocacy organization that has been advancing the movement to strengthen and support families since 1981. The family support movement and FRC seeks to strengthen and empower families and communities so that they can foster the optimal development of children, youth, and adult family members. FRC builds networks, produces resources, advocates for public policy, provides consulting services and gathers knowledge to help the family support movement grow.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
The Family Resource Coalition collects and disseminates information and provides technical support to help establish successful school-linked collaborations—projects that seek to improve school outcomes for children through strong partnerships with parents, social service agencies, and other community resources.

HPDP

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General description:
HPDP focuses on the problems of Hispanic youth: education and employment. HPDP supports high-level policy commissions composed of Hispanics and non-Hispanics; conferences, seminars, and debates around central education and employment issues.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
HPDP seeks to bring its findings to the attention of key groups and leaders throughout the United States, and publishes reports, bulletins, and books based on research and data analysis.

Institute for Responsive Education

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General description:
IRE is a national, nonprofit action research organization. Its mission is to support the development of high academic and citizenship standards for all students in collaboration with educators, parents, community members, and school district leaders. IRE is focused on collaboration with families as a means for reinventing schools to make them effective for all children. The knowledge derived from its action research informs the continuing development of "best practices" in school change.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
In its Responsive Schools Project, IRE works with clusters of K-12 schools in districts serving predominantly low-income families. IRE also advises education leaders about effective strategies for achieving greater public engagement, parent involvement, and school-site improvements to support implementation of new learning standards. Also, IRE researches and asseses new strategies for creating community-embedded schools, such as public school choice and charter schools.

Intercultural Development Research Association

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General description:
IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization that advocates the right of every child to a quality education. For 24 years, IDRA has worked for excellence and equity in education in Texas and across the United States. IDRA conducts research and development activities; creates, implements and administers innovative education programs; and provides teacher, administrator, and parent training and technical assistance.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
IDRA facilitates the development of new linkages within school districts between families, community organizations, and the business sector. In creating new ways of working together, communities and schools are able to refashion their schools to improve student achievement. Examples of selected projects:

- Through the national Mobilization for Equity project, IDRA is developing a network of parents in Texas who can effectively use systems advocacy strategies to ensure key student rights for all children.
- In the Community Leadership for Standards-Based Reform project, IDRA is working with community organizations to support middle schools' efforts to involve families and the larger community.

Institute for Research and Reform in Education

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General description:
The Center for the Advancement of Parent Involvement and School Change was established to support parents in low-income communities to be more effectively involved: in their own children's learning and development, and in changing schools in ways that improve the learning and development of all children in their community.

The Center has compiled information and tools for advancing both of these goals from other advocacy organizations, from research on child and youth development, and from research and evaluation work on schools, school systems and communities. The Center has also built a national staff to support its community-based work.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
The Center focuses all its efforts in moderate-sized communities with relatively low levels of economic resources, large gaps between current and desired levels of student performance, and with public school systems that serve between 10 and 40 thousand students.

The approach of the Center is two-pronged: build grassroots capacity to increase parent involvement in children's education and in promoting effective school change; and, simultaneously, support and pressure the school district, business and other institutional players in the community to respond with policy changes and resource allocations aligned with their goals.

The Los Angeles Educational Partnership

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General description:
The Los Angeles Educational Partnership (LAEP) us a non-profit public education fund working to improve public education for the children of Los Angeles. Since 1984, LAEP has invested more than $35 million in the efforts of educators and community members to develop, test and implement new strategies for strengthening classrooms, schools and communities.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
LAEP parent involvement activities are carried through its Community Initiative which seeks to overcome barriers to student learning by building stronger links between communities and their schools. These activities are implemented though the FamilyCare program which provides technical assistance to school communities to increase access to health, social and community services, encourage more effective parent involvement, and help schools listen to and communicate with parents and community members.

Marian College

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General description:
Marian College is a Catholic, coeducational college established 60 years ago to provide liberal arts and professional higher education to a student body with diverse abilities and religious, cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds. Now serving over 1,300 students, Marian College is guided by the Oldenburg Franciscan sponsorship values — dignity of the individual, responsible stewardship, reconciliation and justice and peace. Marian College, through its Office of Mission Effectiveness and the Department of Teacher Education has a deep commitment to promoting effective education for all students and fostering equal and respectful partnerships between families and educators.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
Marian College served as a coordinating hub for the Family, School and Community Partnership Initiative, 1992-1996, a national and state effort funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. to advance partnership practices in schools and community organizations. Currently, the College is active in: Partners for Parent Leadership, a research project that connects emerging parent leaders with Marian College education students and faculty to meet the challenge of educational excellence in Indianapolis urban schools.

Marshall Caring Community

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General Description:
MCC is a group of educators, human service professionals, parents, residents, business leaders, and local government representatives committed to the goals of assiting young people to achieve school success and families to achieve stability and health. MCC focuses its efforts in the Marshall High School attendance area of Portland, a diverse, inner-city community.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
MCC partners have formed a family involvement action team that develops long- and short-term strategies to involve families in the schools. Some successes are the Marshall Family Resource center, in the high school; the Kelly House, a community resource center; cell phones for teachers; workshops dealing with class barriers for teachers and parents; and training in leadership and community organizing.

The Mar Vista Institute / Mar Vista Family Center

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General description:
The Mar Vista Family Center was founded in 1977 to provide low-income families the tools to create positive change in their lives. The Center serves the high-risk community adjacent to Mar Vista Gardens Federal Housing Project The Center's goal is that parents and children learn to determine their own solutions to problems. Since 1985, the entire Mar Vista Family Center program has been led by parents and youth from the community trained through the Center's unique program.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
Using lessons learned over 20 years at its model preschool program, the Mar Vista Family Center teaches teams of parents, teachers and administrators learn how to work in partnership to support children's education. Weekly workshops focus on sharing responsibilities, communication, problem solving, and integrating parents into the classroom as assistant teachers. The Mar Vista Institute was created in 1997 to provide a larger audiences access to these workshops on a fee-for-service basis.

Missouri Department Of Elementary and Secondary Education

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General Description:
The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is primarily a service agency that works with local school officials and other groups to identify needs within the educational system and to improve educational opportunities and programs for all citizens. Through its regulatory functions, the Department strives to assure the effective and efficient operation of state and federal education programs.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
Two important initiatives sponsored by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education advance parent/family involvement in school reform: Accelerated Schools and Caring Communities. Approximately 150 schools participate in the Missouri Accelerated Schools Project, a school reform effort based on the work of Henry Levin at Stanford University. Partners-families play an important role in the decision-making structure of the school. The Caring Communities initiative involves five state agencies in working together to assist children and families. Community partnerships are formed that support parent/family/community involvement in school reform.

National Association of Elementary School Principals

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General description:
The National Association of Elementary School Principals is a professional organization serving more than 27,000 elementary and middle school principals in the United States and overseas. Representing principals serving some 30 million children in grades pre-K through 8, the Association serves at the national, state, and local levels as an advocate for children and youth, and promotes high professional standards and creative leadership among principals. Among NAESP's services are publications that address the specific needs of principals and the families of their students; a legal assistance program; an annual convention; professional development training programs; services for students; and a national recognition awards program for principals.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
NAESP advances parent/family involvement through regular publications, at the annual convention, and by making resources available. A selection of brochures and videos (in Spanish and English) is available to principals for distribution to families. Each year principals receive six issues of Report to Parents, reproducible bulletins on a variety of topics. Our annual convention provides numer-

ous sessions on the issue of community-family involvement. Finally, NAESP participates in the U.S. Department of Education's Family/School Steering Group of the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education.

National Coalition of Advocates for Students

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General description:
The National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS) is a Boston-based nation-wide network of 23 experienced child advocacy organizations working at the national, state and local levels to improve access to quality public education for students who are at greatest risk for school failure. NCAS includes in its constituency children/families/communities who are poor, members of racial, ethnic and/or language minority groups, recent immigrants, agricultural migrants, as well as those with special needs.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
NCAS is committed to citizen engagement as a constructive means of improving public schools. The current vehicle for much of NCAS's work to inform parents and assist them to develop skills for successfully achieving equity remedies at their local public schools is the Mobilization for Equity Project. MFE involves NCAS national staff and 16 member organizations. The MFE organizing agenda includes 10 key student rights which, taken together, would result in fairer public schools. This agenda is as follows:

Every student has a right to: 1) have parents, advocates, and concerned educators involved in all decision affecting their education; 2) classrooms that support different learning styles and abilities; 3) developmentally appropriate and culturally supportive curriculum and teaching strategies offered in languages they can understand; 4) full access to a common body of knowledge along with the opportunity to learn higher order skills; 5) assessment and grading strategies that enhance individual strengths and potential; 6) support services that address individual needs; 7) schools that are safe, attractive, and free from prejudice; 8) attend school unless they pose a danger to other children or school staff; 9) instruction by teachers who hold high expectations for all students and are prepared to meet the challenges of diverse classrooms; and 10) equal opportunity for education supported by greater resources for schools serving students most vulnerable to academic failure.

National Coalition of Education Activists (NCEA)

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General description:
NCEA is a multi-racial network of parents, school staff, union and community activists, children's advocates, and others working for public schools that serve all children well. NCEA is a resource for these local activists and strives to make connections among groups sharing similar aims, with the long-term goal of building a genuine movement for equitable, high quality education.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
NCEA advances family involvement in school reform by:

- Creating opportunities for multi-racial, cross constituency discussion of key issues and practical solutions to education problems.
- Providing non-technical referrals and information with an emphasis on action and a perspective that values equity.
- Linking individuals with like-minded activists and organizations they can work with and learn from.
- Helping activists develop their knowledge and skills.

National Congress of Parents and Teachers (PTA)

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General Description:
The National PTA is the largest volunteer child advocacy group in the United States. An organization of parents, teachers, students and other citizens active in their schools and

communities, the PTA is a leader in reminding our nation of its obligations to children. Nearly 6.5 million people belong to this nonprofit, noncommercial, nonsectarian and nonpartisan organization. The National PTA advocates before decision makers for children's rights to better health, education and well-being, working closely with other national education and health agencies and organizations. It provides current information and offers programs, guidance, publications and training to state and local PTA groups in developing family-centered programs and encouraging parent involvement in all areas of a child's life.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
In the midst of the current climate of education reform, the National PTA maintains what numerous research studies and years of experience as advocates on behalf of children have demonstrated to be true: Parent and family involvement increases student achievement and success. Staying informed and responding to the national climate surrounding school reform issues is an important focus of the Education Commission and Legislative Program Committee of the National PTA. To this end, the National PTA The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs were developed by the National PTA in cooperation with education and parent involvement professionals. The program standards of excellence and their quality indicators were created to be used in conjunction with other national standards and reform initiatives in support of children's learning and success.

New American Schools

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General description:
New American Schools is a coalition of the nation's top business leaders and educators committed to improving student achievement nationwide through whole-school change. For the past five years, NAS has fostered the development and implementation of eight comprehensive designs, or blueprints, for improving student performance. NAS spent several years developing and field-testing its designs. Unlike many reforms, NAS designs improve the whole school, from curricula and instruction to resource use and community and parent involvement.. Over 700 schools, serving 350,000 students in thirty states, are now implementing NAS designs.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
In NAS communities — with the involvement of teachers, parents, and business and community leaders — strong schools and districts are already taking root. New American Schools has learned first-hand that you cannot improve a school without the active involvement and support of the school community. Nor can you reach scale in the absence of broad-based community support and ownership. Therefore, our strategy embraces and nurtures substantive and ongoing engagement of these key stakeholder groups at both the district and school level.

New Visions for Public Schools

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General Description:
New Visions for Public Schools is a private, not-for-profit organization that aims to improve the quality of education children recieve in New York City's public schools. New Visions mobilizes private support for school reform and works with educators, parents, students, city leaders and community partners to develop programs that lead to better instruction, higher student achievement and greater school accountability.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
One of the major initiatives of New Visions is the establishment of nearly thirty small schools which offer parents, teachers and students a intimate, rigorous and community-based education. New Visions Schools were created from of a process in which 15,000 community organizations, parents, cultural groups and educational institutions were asked for their ideas about what makes a good public school. Parents and families are expected to play a major role. A school council made up of parents, students, teachers and other community members shapes and manages the school.

Project HighRoad is designed to bring a comprehensive, community-based program that offers middle school students positive alternatives to destructive behaviors. Started in

1990. Project HighRoad features a community advisory committee at each site. The committee includes parents, students, community leaders, clergy and local police. The program has, with strong parent involvement, demonstrated that providing a full slate of academic, recreational and counseling programs supports the healthy development of young people.

Oklahoma Responsive Leaders for All Children and Families Initiative

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General description:
The Oklahoma Responsive Leaders for All Children and Families Initiative is comprised of a state-level and five-site level groups that focus on collaborating to better meet the needs of children and families. The partnership started in 1992 with representatives from the University of Oklahoma, most State agencies, five school districts, and community groups. A site is defined as a school district and the agencies and community groups within that district's boundaries. The state-level groups have formed structures for working to better meet the needs of children and families in both the school and community setting.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
The State-level and each site have identified stakeholders interested in working together to better meet the needs of children and families. The sites have participated in retreats, identified barriers and solution, developed action plans and governance structures that focus on the characteristics of the site, and have implemented plans for better meeting the needs of children both in and outside of school settings.

Parents for Public Schools, Inc.

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General description:
Parents for Public Schools is a national organization of grassroots chapters dedicated to recruiting students, involving parents, and improving public schools. We believe that offering every child the highest quality of public education is vital to American democracy. By mobilizing parents who reflect our diverse culture, we build excellent schools and better communities.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
Parents for Public Schools translates a commitment to public education into a vehicle for school improvement and community support. Each chapter works to address issues in their individual communities, but are united by their fundamental commitment to public schools. By organizing parents across the community, PPS unites parents in school improvement efforts at a district level and holds the community accountable for quality public schools.

Parents RYSE

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General description:
Parents RYSE is a program that has been developed in two communities north of New York City. The aim of the program is to encourage underserved parents to actively participate in the academic development of their children. We believe that all children are at risk of underachievement, and seek to help those minority students who traditionally find themselves in classes that do not adequately challenge them. In other words, we help families with students who could be high achievers, but who have been placed in less difficult courses during middle school years.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
In the coming academic year, we will continue to provide workshops, tutorials, and Saturday activities for families in an effort to encourage high achievement by creating support networks for both the students and their families. We are working to convince the two school districts of the importance of expanded program activities for parents. For example, programs that (1) explain the demands of middle school including the importance of completing homework, (2) encourage parent participation at

school during the day, and (3) define academically enriching activities that can be done in the home.

Public Education Network

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General description:
The Public Education Network (PEN) helps local education funds (LEFs) and other community-based organizations build public school systems that result in high achievement for every child. We believe that independent, community-based organizations are the best mechanism for creating broad-based citizen support for public education and for achieving fundamental reforms in the nation's public schools.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
LEFs advance family involvement in school reform in a variety of ways. For example, they publish accessible information about education issues, including school board elections, school system budgets, and student outcomes. They also provide small grants to teams of parents and teachers; link families with technology; and provide resource spaces and services for families. Historically, parents are a core constituency for local education funds and form the base for wider public engagement efforts in many communities.

Parents Union for Public Schools, Inc.

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General Description:
Founded in 1972, Parents Union for Public Schools is an independent, citywide membership organization of public school parents from all neighborhoods of Philadelphia. With a diverse parent board of directors, Parents Union is a collective voice of parents working for better public schools and a quality education for every public school child.

Our mission is to involve, organize and empower parents at their children's schools. We believe that parents are the best advocates and that students succeed in school when their parents are involved in their education.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
Parents Union informs parents of changes in educational reform through workshops and training sessions. Advocates at Parents Union monitor systematic changes in policy and procedures that effect public education in Philadelphia. We translate materials focused around school reform into user friendly materials so that parents have a much clearer understanding about school reform. We serve as a collective voice for parents on many different school reform related issues. Our goal is to help parent advocate more effectively for their children.

Practical Parenting Partnerships

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General description:
Practical Parenting Partnerships (PPP) is a K-12 family resource-parent education program offered through the school district to parents, educators, and students. PPP is designed to support adults in their roles as educators and nurturers of school-age children. Its goal is to help all children become responsible and confident individuals and community members who can function to the best of their abilities in their personal lives, in their educational experiences, and within a complex society. PPP offers opportunities for networks between families, schools and the community.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
A school begins by sending a team (must include a school administrator, usually the principal) to PPP implementation training where team members experience the process for partnering with families and receive information and resources for starting their local initiatives. PPP offers a theoretical framework, research-based parent education materials, and ongoing technical assistance through monthly newsletters, site visits, networking groups, regional meetings, and an annual conference. PPP is a flexible approach to parent involvement that allows local autonomy, yet provides structure and practical tools to use.

Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence

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General description:
The Prichard Committee is a non-partisan organization of parents and volunteer citizens founded in 1980. Its mission is to provide a pubic voice advocating vastly improved education for all Kentuckians. The Prichard committee speaks out to see that progress in education is made; recommends solutions to problems; informs the pubic, legislators, governors, and education officials; and stimulates and works with local parents and citizens. Much of the Committee's present work emphasizes parent involvement, from the importance of parents in the school-based decision making process to ways parents can help their own children succeed in school. It also suggests ways to improve Kentucky schools through task forces, publications, and public discussion.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
In general, the Prichard Committee advances parent/family involvement by mobilizing the public, creating political will and staying power, to see that Kentucky's academic standards are in place and are driving improved teaching in the classroom. The work of the Committee is through a comprehensive approach of town forums, local "affiliates" of parents and citizens, facilitated conversations called "Parents and Teachers Talking Together," an 800 line, speeches, media relations, family-friendly publications, lobbying, and a regional staff that extends the Committee's presence and credibility statewide. In 1997 the Committee is undertaking its largest project ever, the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, which will inform and train parents to take a role in their children's education as well as in the larger education community.

Research and Training Associates, Inc.

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General description:
Research & Training Associate, Inc. (RTA) is engaged in research, evaluation, technical assistance and staff development supporting systemic reform efforts in educational, criminal justice, and community settings. RTA has primarily focused on providing technical assistance in planning and implementation of system wide reform, staff development to accelerate teaching and learning, parent and community involvement, extended opportunities for learning, and assessment and evaluation to state departments of education, regional educational service centers, school districts, high-poverty schools, and parent groups.
How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
Expanding parent/family partnerships in school reforms is a key element of comprehensive systemic reform efforts. RTA assists organizations in assessing the quality of home-school partnerships, planning for parent involvement and expanded roles for parents; providing staff development to administrators and teachers on strategies for involving parents; conducting workshops for parents on strategies for extending learning opportunities in the home; and evaluating the effectiveness of home-school partnerships. These include implementation and summative studies for the Even Start program, the Parents as Teachers National Center, The Bureau of Indian Affairs' Family and Child Education program, the Accelerated Schools project, the Missouri Practical Parenting Partnerships program, and the Project Construct National Center.

The Right Question Project, Inc.

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General description:
The Right Question Project, Inc. (RQP) designs innovative educational strategies for low and moderate-income communities. The strategies strengthen participants' ability to:

- effectively advocate for themselves
- participate in decision-making processes that affect them
- hold institutions and decision-makers accountable

RQP's strategies are used around the country to address a range of issues, including housing, welfare, health care, early childhood education, campaign finance reform and citizen participation.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:

In 1993, RQP initiated a strategy to prepare parents to:

- Support their children's education
- Monitor their academic progress
- Advocate for meeting their children's educational needs

The original four workshop curriculum continues to evolve and new curricula have been used to support middle school reform. Two statewide efforts are underway in collaboration with HIPPY and other early childhood programs interested in helping parents with the transition to public schools.

San Diego City Schools

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General description:
San Diego is the sixth largest urban school district in the nation. It was one of the first to have a parent involvement policy approved by its Board of Education. This policy has resulted in resources, services, and practices district wide to support meaningful involvement of parents in the education of their children. This district's Parent Involvement and Support Unit anchors district efforts to establish partnerships with parents to support academic achievement of students.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
Four specific efforts are underway to advance parent/family involvement in school reform:

1. Parents and community members were invited (in equal numbers with teachers and administrators) to develop an accountability system for the district's schools.
2. Parents are working with administrators and teacher association representatives to review and rework the current Shared Decision-Marking Guidelines.
3. Grade level standards are being developed for major curriculum areas by teams of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members.
4. The district's Parent Involvement Task Force has developed draft Parent Involvement Standards for the type and quality of parent involvement necessary to ensure high levels of student achievement.

University of California

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General description:
The Department of Education offers MA and Ph.D. degrees in a variety of areas including Educational Leadership, Language, Culture and Literacy, Teaching and Learning, Human Development, Clinical and School Psychology and Counseling. Students may also earn a California Credential in Administration, School Psychology and Special Education. UCSB faculty are engaged in a variety of studies, many conducted in collaboration with districts and schools.

How organization advances parent/family involvement in school reform:
As a member of the UCSB faculty , we are involved in research projects of relevance to the above theme: 1) Cambodian and Korean parent involvement and their levels of student achievement, 2) how teachers unions support or constrain school-home collaboration, 3) California School Leadership teams, some of which involve parents and students, 4) a Vygotshian framework to explore how the identification of "more capable others" may serve as a strategy to assist Latino family involvement.

Two projects recently completed include a handbook and workshops for middle school parents, teachers and students to explore school-home partnership topics; and a study of the need for coherent and comprehensive district approaches, including evaluation of teacher parent involvement practices. In addition, Janet teaches a course on families, schools and communities to prospective administrators and other educators.

Dulcie is an Advisor to the Associated Students/UCSB, serving on several community outreach efforts.

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